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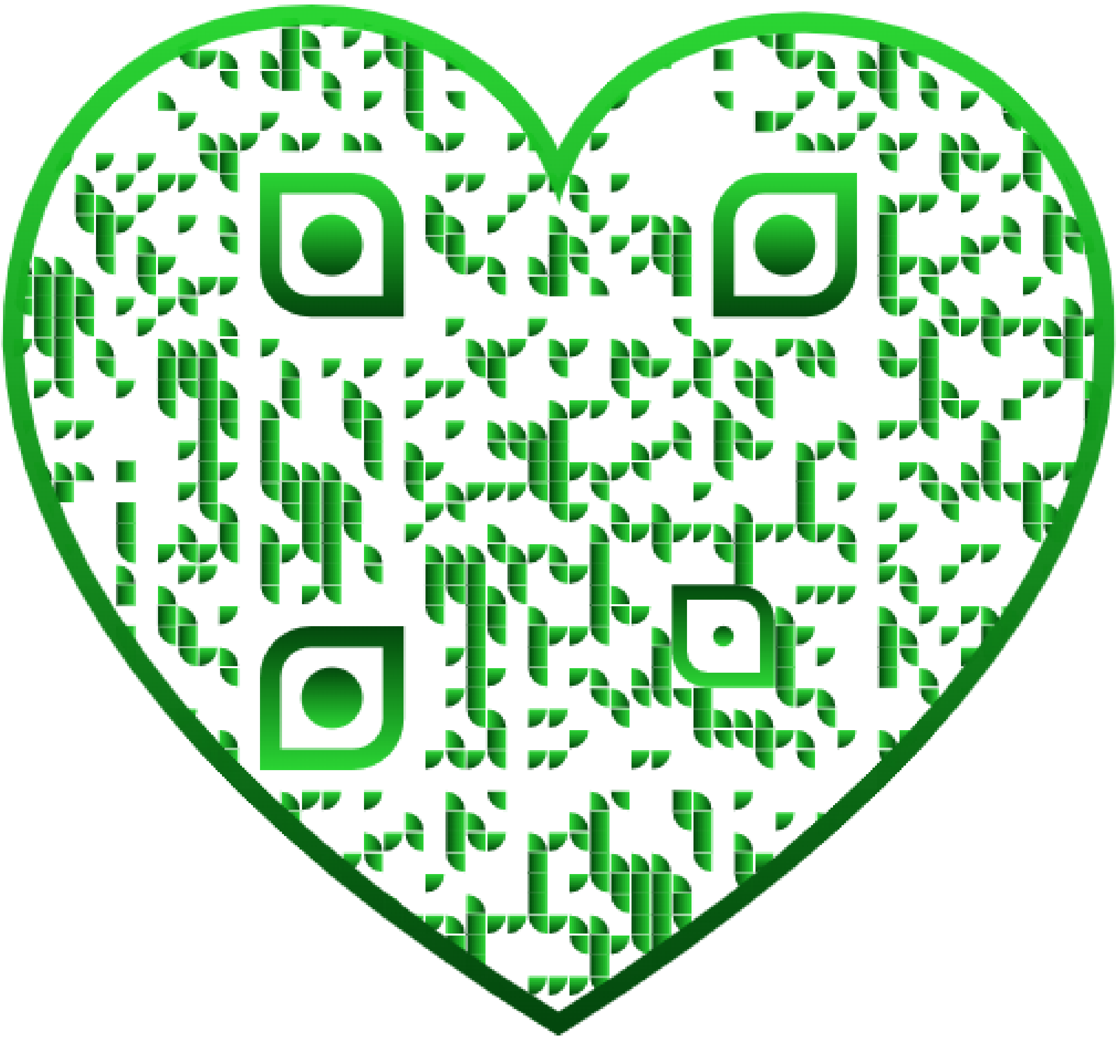
"I'd go to a punk show then go home and listen to Foghat, and not think it was a crime."

FUTURE
ISSUE 284



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ROSS HALFIN

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RICH GALBRAITH/ICONICPIX

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Steve Hackett

Under A Mediterranean Sky

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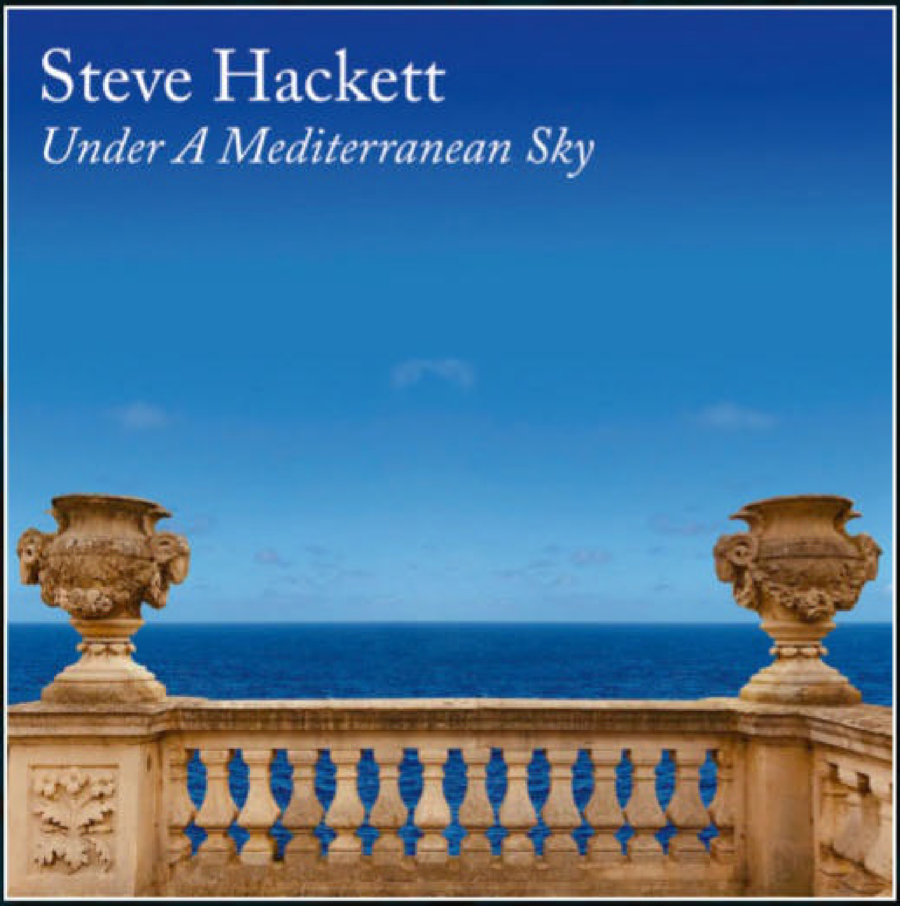

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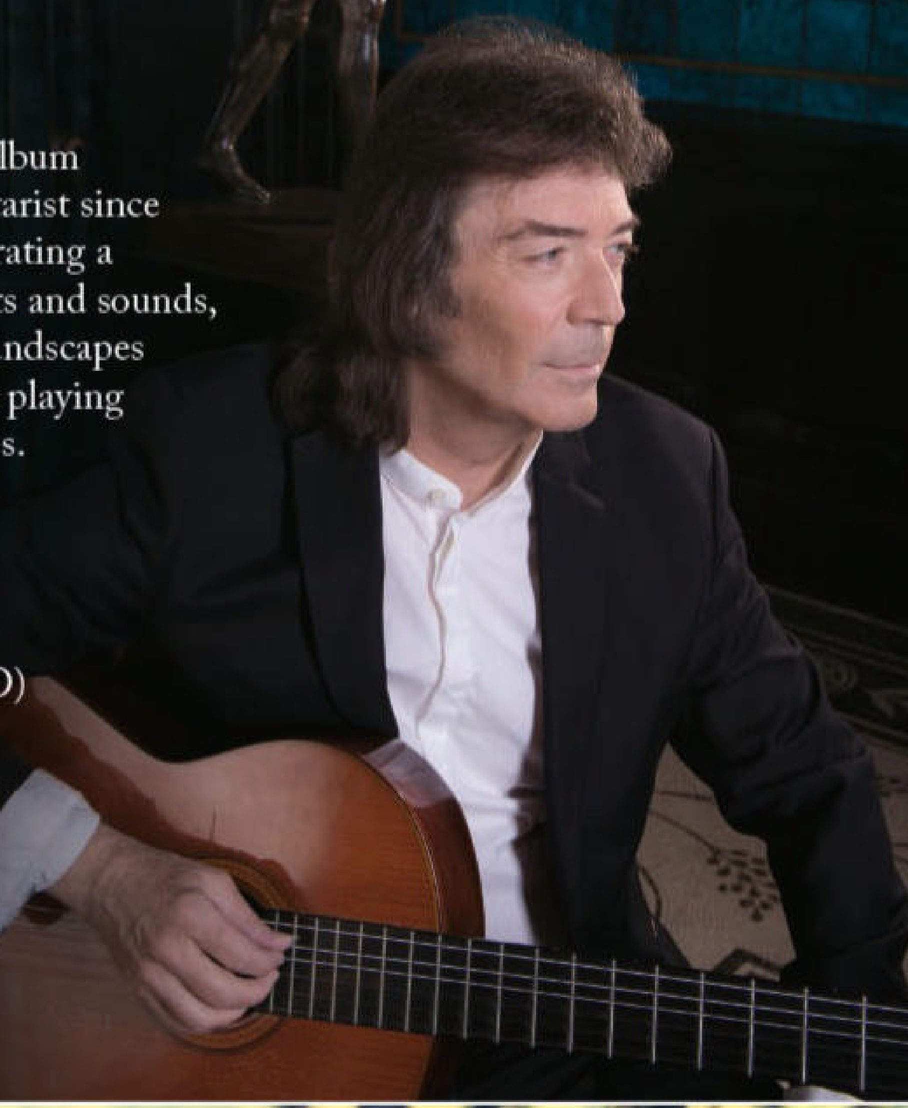

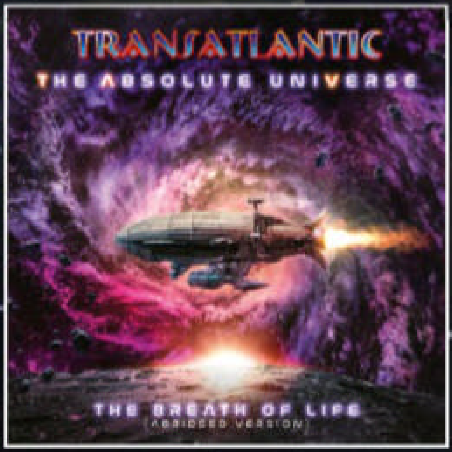

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WDFD RECORDS

I'll never forget the first time I heard Foo Fighters on my favourite 'classic rock' radio station. It was the song *Learn To Fly*, and as the opening notes came through my distorted car speakers I glanced at the radio dial in shock and thought: "Classic rock? Foo Fighters?" Sandwiched between Foghat and the Doobie Brothers, I thought this must be some wicked prank by a rogue disc jockey on his last day of work, doing his best to exact revenge upon his unsuspecting, abusive superior. "Obviously a one off," I thought.

Nevertheless, it got me thinking. What exactly is 'classic rock'? Is it a genre defined by a specific time, or style? Is it a measure of tone, or aesthetic? It's difficult to interpret, but the term definitely carries with it a puzzling set of implications. I have my own list of 'classic' bands, some that you could even argue are not 'rock', though in time I wouldn't be surprised if popular perception mutated, eventually placing them in this category based on the simple notion that there were indeed electric guitars and drums utilised within the music, no matter what length the pants.

When asked to help curate this issue, I happily obliged, as I've always been keen to shine a little light on artists that I find inspiring in hopes that others may feel the same. Bob Mould, a hero of mine, surely fits into the category of 'classic' and 'rock', as he has not only influenced and inspired me, but generations of other young musicians as well. Cardiacs, although relatively fringe, brought me to my knees upon first listen, and certainly qualify as an invaluable contribution to the history of music in the same way that Devo or Oingo Boingo did. David Bowie, The Damned, King Crimson, Siouxsie And The Banshees, Rainbow... These are all obvious staples in the pantheon of rock music as we know it today, but what will tomorrow bring? Newer artists like Kills Birds, The Bird And The Bee, Parquet Courts and Blackberry Smoke surely inspire, and given time could very well be considered 'classic' in their own right.

I wouldn't be surprised if someday you glance at your radio dial in shock upon first listen of Happy Chichester's *A Man Needs An Airplane* and think: "This is classic rock?" Or will you? With its swirling melody and lush orchestration, it is just as timeless as the songs that we've grown to love over the years, hopefully inspiring and influencing generations to come.

I still listen to my favorite classic rock station on occasion, and every now and then I hear a new addition to its time-tested playlist. Which to me is a good indication that the term is ever changing, ever evolving, and there is more to come.

Grab the nearest guitar, you may be next...

Dave Grohl,
Guest Editor

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Stuff we want you to listen to: The Bird And The Bee, *Again And Again*

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Love And Rockets, *Earth, Sun, Moon*

Guitar
Pat Smear
The Damned, *Damned, Damned, Damned*

Guitar
Chris Shiflett
Johnny Burnette, *Train Kept A-Rollin'*

Keyboard/Piano
Rami Jaffee
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LET'S DANCE!

With his determination, dedication, energy and wide-ranging talent, one man has taken the Foo Fighters from effectively a solo project to one of the biggest bands in the world. Now, with their new album, they want to make you move your feet.

Words: **Dave Everley**

"TAKING THIS SHIT TOO SERIOUSLY CAN BE THE DEATH OF ANY BAND."

DAVE GROHL

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

Fight club: (l-r) Taylor Hawkins, Dave Grohl, Pat Smear, Chris Shiflett, Nate Mendel, Rami Jaffee.

INSET: GETTY

Dave Grohl has many great memories of Lemmy, but there's one in particular that's imprinted on his brain.

It was late morning in Los Angeles years ago, and the Foo Fighters frontman was en route to The Rainbow, Lemmy's Sunset Strip hangout of choice, for an early-doors meeting with the Motörhead mainman. Halfway there, Grohl got a call: could he come to Lemmy's apartment instead? Sure, said Grohl. After all, he'd never been through those hallowed portals.

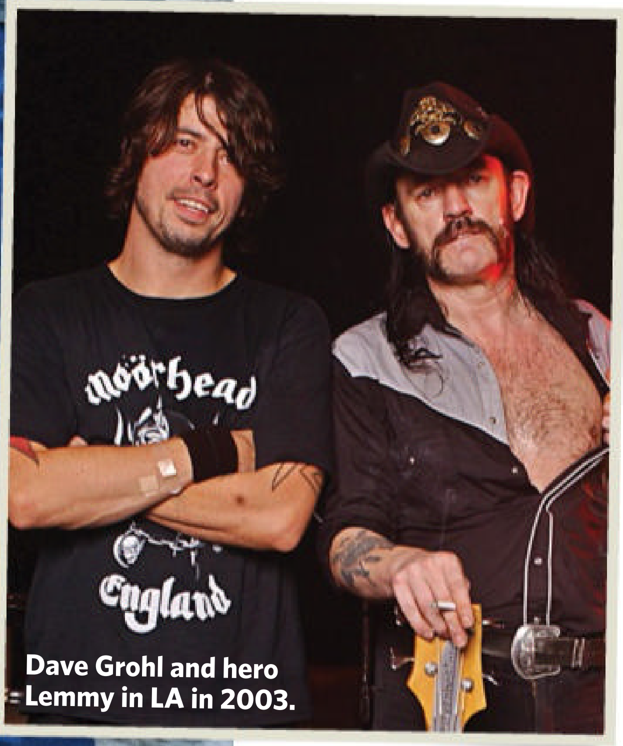
"So I got to the apartment," says Grohl, laughing, "and I was shocked at how fucking disgusting it was. These aisles of magazines and VHS tapes stacked three to four feet high, Lemmy sitting on the couch, in his black bikini underwear with a spiderweb on them, after just dyeing his hair black, doing a phone interview, with a videogame on pause on the television."

Lemmy beckoned for Grohl to take a seat on the sofa next to him as he finished the interview. When it was done, Lemmy asked him if he wanted a drink. "It was fucking eleven-fifteen in the morning," says Grohl. "I said: 'Sure.'"

And there Grohl sat for the next five hours, on Lemmy's couch, knocking back Lemmy-sized measures of Jack Daniel's, with Lemmy in his underpants next to him. They listened to old Dudley Moore tapes and the new Motörhead album, during which the man who wrote and sang it stared into Grohl's eyes and mouthed every lyric as it came through the television speakers. For a bourbon-fuelled Motörhead fan, this was as good as it gets.

"I will never, ever forget every little detail of that day," Grohl says now. "Especially not the black underwear with a spiderweb and a black widow spider right where the dick is."

Jack Daniel's, Motörhead, spiderweb underpants, it's a very Lemmy story. But it's a very Dave Grohl story too. He may lead one of the most successful rock'n'roll bands of the past 25 years, but there'll always be part of him that will forever be that teenage rock'n'roll fan. For all the record sales, the stadium gigs and the A-list names in his phone – and there are a *lot* of those – Dave Grohl is still one of us.



Dave Grohl and hero Lemmy in LA in 2003.

It's 5pm in the UK and 9am in LA when he calls me via Zoom. He's at home, dressed in sweatpants and a T-shirt and nursing a coffee. He's already sorted out breakfast. "I know what it feels like to jump up in front of eighty thousand people and go: 'Come on, motherfuckers!'" he says. "But I also know what it's like to hear my alarm and go downstairs and make scrambled eggs and bacon for my kids."

We're here to talk about the Foo Fighters' yet-to-be-released tenth album, *Medicine At Midnight,* ▷

It ain't half hot, mum… Grohl cools it at London Stadium, June 2018.

(rescheduled for February), and how a livewire punk-rock kid from Virginia ended up becoming a rubber-stamped stadium-straddling superstar. But mostly we're here talk about rock'n'roll.

"Well," Grohl says decisively, "I'm your man for that."

2020 should have been a banner year for the Foo Fighters. As well as the intended release of the new album, it also marked the 25th anniversary of both their self-titled debut and the formation of the Foos as an actual band, as opposed to a one-man project in which Dave Grohl played everything including the kitchen sink.

"Oh god, man, we had a world domination scheme that lasted for eighteen months," he says of the band's pre-covid plans. "It had movies and documentaries and special gigs, and then that all kind of disappeared. We hit pause on everything in March and we all kind of retreated and went our different ways. I had a break for the first time in ten years, which was the most unusual feeling."

"I WANTED TO MAKE A FOO FIGHTERS ALBUM PEOPLE COULD DANCE TO."

DAVE GROHL

Six months after it was originally due to be released, *Medicine At Midnight* is head-butting the cage door, clamouring to be let out. It was recorded in a fast and furious few weeks at the end of 2019, in a big old rented house in Encino, California. Strange things happened there. More than one member of the Foo Fighters thought the property was haunted. "Oh, weird shit definitely happened," says Grohl, although he won't be drawn any further than that.

Most of Foo Fighters' recent albums have had an angle. There's been the half electric/half-acoustic double album (2005's *In Your Honor*), the back-to-basics garage record (2011's excellent *Wasting Light*), the record of the documentary (2015's star-studded *Sonic Highways*), the 'Slayer meets the Beach Boys' mash-up record (2017's *Concrete And Gold*). And *Medicine At Midnight*? If Grohl is to be believed, this is the Foo Fighters' party record.

"I thought rather than overcomplicate things and try to make this riffy prog rock record, which is a type of music we love, let's simplify everything and make the choruses bigger and the grooves fatter and the tempos more up, so people will bounce around for three hours when we eventually get to play it live," he explains. "You know when your parents start getting older and wearing things that they shouldn't wear in public? That might be what the Foo Fighters are doing right now."

He uses the word 'disco' to describe the nine-track album, and that snappy summary broadly fits songs such as quirky lead-off single *Shame, Shame*, with its snapping drum loops, and the defiantly

ROSS HALFIN

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

CHRIS SHIFLETT

The guitarist/vocalist joined the Foos in '99. And no, he didn't turn down a Guns N' Roses audition to do so.

When Dave Grohl told you that with the new album he wanted to make a Foo Fighters record that got people dancing, what did you think?
Well it's not like we sit down and Dave goes: "I wanna make a dance record." I would love to pretend everything's this big, planned-out thing, but it's not. It's more like he said: "I've been listening to a lot of [Bowie's album] *Let's Dance*, and the feel of that record oozes into what we do."

Was the house in which you recorded the *Medicine At Midnight* album really haunted?
I'm not a big believer in ghost stories, but I will say we recorded it in a spooky old fucked-up house in the Valley, for sure. You'd be walking down a dark pathway at night and it would be like: "What the fuck is that?"

You were in a band called Lost Kittenz in the late eighties. What were they like?
Oh, exactly what it sounded like. We were trying to be Faster Pussycat. I grew up in Santa Barbara, and Hanoi Rocks were one of my favourite bands. I'd visit LA when I was a kid, and it was when Guns N' Roses and Jetboy was bubbling up. That was the moment I went: "Fuck yeah, this shit is for me!"

Is it true that you turned down an audition for Guns N' Roses before joining the Foo Fighters?
That story has been so misunderstood. In 1999, a buddy of mine said to me: "I think I could get you an audition with Guns N' Roses, cos I hear they're auditioning guitar players." And I said: "I heard the Foo Fighters' guitar player just quit. See if you can get me an audition with them." That was when Guns was Axl and a bunch of other people. Believe me, if it was 1987 I would have gone: "Hey guys, I'm over here! Come get me!"

Were you intimidated when you joined the Foos?
Oh, hugely. I was so nervous going into that audition, because I love them so much and I wanted the gig so bad. When I joined, I'd have to tell myself: "Stop staring at Dave on stage." I spent the first few years constantly worried about getting fired. That's what happens when you join a band who are on their third guitar player in three records. Like: "Something keeps going fucking wrong with this position here." Pat Smear jokingly said to me the other day: "Dude, you're still the new guy." And I've been here for twenty-one years!

You've got a great country music podcast, *Walking The Floor*. When did you get properly into country?
The singer in [Shiflett's pre-Foos band] No Use For A Name was really into Uncle Tupelo and Whiskeytown, and he turned me on to that alt.country thing. It struck a chord, and I just dived into classic country. It's so deep you can go off on that forever.

"I WANTED THE GIG SO BAD... I SPENT THE FIRST FEW YEARS CONSTANTLY WORRIED ABOUT GETTING FIRED."

CHRIS SHIFLETT

funky title track. But it's less John Travolta-in-a-white-suit, more *The Game*-era Queen or early-80s Bowie. "Most Bowie purists would tear me to fucking shreds for saying *Let's Dance* is my favourite Bowie record," he says. "But honestly, as a drummer listening to Omar Hakim and Tony Thompson [both of whom played on *Let's Dance*], I'm, like: 'Wow, they really incorporated this heavy funk into a lot of their songs.' Those songs were danceable. I wanted to make a Foo Fighters album people could dance to."

Still, *Medicine At Midnight* doesn't spend too much time showing off its Tony Manero moves before reverting to type. The speedy *No Son Of Mine* nods back to Grohl's punk roots, while *Waiting On A War* and blockbusting closer *Love Dies Young* are arena-ready anthems that share DNA with past Foos megahits *The One* and *All My Life*. It's a livewire record, and a joyous one.

"I mean, come on, that's what we need at the moment, right?" he says. And it's difficult to argue with him.

Dave Grohl grew up in Springfield, Virginia, a short drive away from Washington DC. The US capital was a hothouse for the early-80s punk and hardcore scene, and the teenage Grohl threw himself into it as both a fan and a musician. He felt at home there, surrounded by two or three hundred other misfits in the moshpit of some DC sweatbox or maybe playing on stage with his early band Scream. But while he embraced punk rock, he didn't commit to some of its more exclusionist dogma.

"In the punk scene, there was this anti-hero, fuck-classic-rock'n'roll mentality," he says. "And I understood, culturally and politically, why a lot of those punk-rock musicians disagreed with all that stuff. But at the same time I loved The Beatles and AC/DC. That music had my heart too. I'd go to this sweaty punk rock show, and then I would go ⊳

NATE MENDEL

The Foos' bassist since the beginning is also the singer, songwriter and guitarist with his own band, Lieutenant.

Dave Grohl is pitching *Medicine At Midnight* as a Foo Fighters record you could dance to. As a bassist, that must have been music to your ears.
I was like, yeah, I'm on board. With any band there's always this push-pull between your musical history and trying to do something new and fresh. There's always some element of: "Let's try to do things different this time." That's what we tried to do here.

Was the house you recorded the album in really haunted?
Everybody's got their own definition of what counts as haunted. I'm more of a sceptic. If I see a window slam on its own I'm like, the wind caused it. Or if there's steps in an empty room, I'm, like, it's a raccoon. There's definitely some creepy vibes in the house, but I have to chalk it up to something other than the supernatural.

You've been in the Foo Fighters since Dave put the band together. What was the very first rehearsal like?
We rehearsed in a space we shared with Krist Novoselic's band Sweet 75, this cool loft space in Seattle. What I remember is that Dave was comfortable with a level of sloppiness that I wasn't. Dave's a thousand times better musician than me, but he just doesn't have the patience to rehearse in depth: "Let's go do stuff." And I'm like: "Things sound a little shaky. Are we all playing the same thing there?"

You toured the first Foo Fighters record travelling in a van. Is it true that to mark the twentieth anniversary of the band you were going to do the same thing?
It is. We were going to physically do it in the same van, which we still own, in the same venues on the same dates. We were just going to do exactly the same tour. There were some people in the organisation that were relieved when that idea didn't happen.

Dave and Taylor Hawkins have rock'n'roll in their DNA. Were you the guy hanging out with Lemmy at the Rainbow or speed-dialling Paul Stanley to come play your birthday?
No, I'm the antithesis of the rock'n'roll guy. We recently went through a bunch of old photos of the band, and in a lot of them I'm just sitting in a corner reading a book.

2020 marked your twenty-fifth anniversary as a Foo Fighter. How did you celebrate?
I didn't even really register what date it was, cos we were in the middle of the quarantine thing. We sent each other a sweet little text exchange. That was the best we could do, but it was enough.

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

"THERE'S ALWAYS SOME ELEMENT OF: 'LET'S TRY TO DO THINGS DIFFERENT THIS TIME.' THAT'S WHAT WE TRIED TO DO HERE."
NATE MENDEL

home and listen to fucking Foghat, and not think it was a crime. [Mock-huffily] 'I think I'm allowed to do both.'"

Still, he carried that punk-rock spirit with him when he schlepped up to Seattle in 1989 to join a second-tier grunge band called Nirvana. Nobody, least of all Dave Grohl, expected them to become the defining rock band of the 90s.

"When I first joined the band it was so much fun," he says. "I lived on the couch in Kurt's living room, we rehearsed in a barn, we set up our gear and played those songs and people bounced around and got hot and sweaty. I really loved the connection and the appreciation that Nirvana's audience had with the band.

"And then there was a period where we started to feel a bit out of place, as the band got bigger and bigger, as we're on television shows and pop radio and magazine covers. It felt a little uncomfortable. But I was also the drummer, so I wasn't the most recognisable person in the band. I could walk in the front door of a Nirvana show and fucking nobody would really hassle me."

I'm sure that's not true.

"It's *almost* true. My existence in that band was so purely simple. And then things got complicated and much darker. A lot of it had to do with drugs, a lot of it had to do with finally getting to a place that felt completely foreign and not entirely healthy. And over time that proved to be hard to escape from. So yes, there were a lot of really beautiful moments and a lot of really devastating moments. It ran the gamut."

Kurt Cobain's suicide in 1994 and the end of Nirvana is well-documented. Since then Grohl has largely steered away from covering his former band's songs. On the handful of occasions that he has, it's always been alongside Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic and latter-day touring guitarist Pat Smear rather than with the Foo Fighters. Tellingly, Grohl has never sung any of Cobain's songs himself, instead preferring to enlist guest vocalists such as Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon, Annie Clark of St Vincent, and Joan Jett.

"I wouldn't feel comfortable singing a song that Kurt sang," he says. "I feel perfectly at home playing those songs on the drums. And I love playing them with Krist and Pat and another vocalist. I still have dreams that we're in Nirvana, that we're still a band. I still dream there's an empty arena waiting for us to play. But I don't sit down at home and run through *Smells Like Teen Spirit* by myself. It's just a reminder that the person who is responsible for those beautiful songs is no longer with us. It's bittersweet."

PAT SMEAR

The guitarist is on his second stint with the Foos, having rejoined the band in 2005.

Who sends up the Bat Signal when it's time to make a new Foo Fighters record?
Here's what always happens. We'll do a long-ass tour, we'll all be exhausted, we'll say something ridiculous like we'll take a year off. Then a month later Dave will send a text going: "Hey, I've got some riffs and bits and pieces…" And he'll send you a dozen songs. Like: "Oh shit, he's inspired." That's how this one started.

You started out as a member of original LA punk band The Germs in the seventies. What was it like being in the middle of that scene?
What made it so great was that there was no set thing about what punk rock was. You could have a band with two keyboard players and nobody would think: "Wait, this isn't punk rock." If you were an outcast band doing something that nobody wanted anything to do with in the mainstream rock world, then you were punk.

What did you make of Dave the first time you met him?
It was at a dinner. I flew up to Seattle to meet Nirvana. We were at some fancy restaurant, and I'm going: "'I don't have enough money to pay for this shit." And then Krist [Novoselic, bassist] pulls out a Nirvana credit card. I'm like: "What the fuck is that?" They were all really nice and kind, but Dave was the most welcoming of all.

When Nirvana ended after Kurt Cobain's death, did you walk away from music completely?
Yes. That was the second time my good friend and singer died too early because of fucking heroin [Germs singer Darby Crash OD'd in 1980]. I thought: "I don't like this any more. I don't want to do it."

Did Dave have to work hard to persuade you to join the Foos in 1995?
No. We were just hanging out and he said: "Oh, I made this cassette, no big deal, check it out." So I listened to it, and thought: "If he does put a band together, I want in."

You left the Foos in 1997, then came back in 2005. What changed your mind?
I missed them, and I missed playing. Every time they made a new album, Dave would come and play it for me and I would get excited: "It's so good, I wish I was on it." But it took a while to jump back in.

When you're standing in front of eighty thousand people at a festival, does the punk-rock kid in you ever think: "What the hell am I doing here?"
Yes and no. I always wanted to be in a big band, but I didn't want to be the star. My role isn't to be the guy who does the shit, my role is to be the guy who helps the guy who does the shit.

"MY ROLE ISN'T TO BE THE GUY WHO DOES THE SHIT, MY ROLE IS TO BE THE GUY WHO HELPS THE GUY WHO DOES THE SHIT."

PAT SMEAR

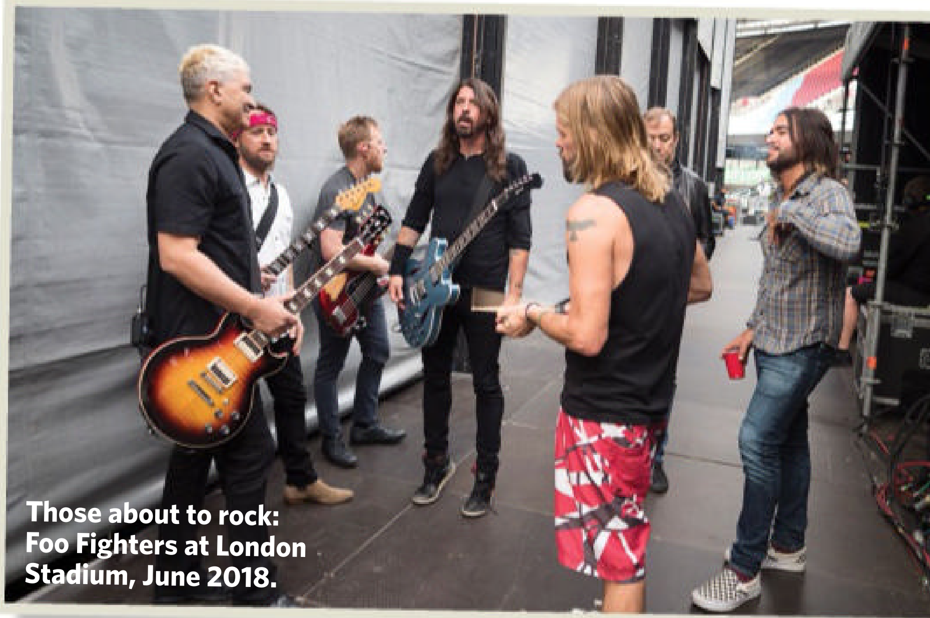
One of the many Foos-related projects that has been sidelined temporarily by the pandemic is a documentary film Grohl has been working on. Titled *What Drives Us*, it's a hymn to the touring life and the romance of rock'n'roll that fuels every band at the very start of their career. As Grohl puts it: "It's about what makes people throw their lives away and jump in an old van with their buddies and no guarantees that there'll ever be any reward other than just playing music with your friends."

Grohl interviewed several of his friends and peers for the film: members of Metallica, Guns N' Roses, AC/DC, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, U2, Black Flag

"Everybody had the same story," he says. "Nobody ever thought: 'I'm gonna take over the world and become a stadium-class rock icon.' They were just like: 'Fuck school, I'm getting in a shitty van with my friends.' All of them, every single fucking one of them."

Grohl has 'got in the van' twice in his career. The first time was in the 80s, a period that began with his stint as the drummer with Scream and ended with the point Nirvana suddenly went supernova. And then, for some weird reason, he did it again when he was getting the Foo Fighters off the ground.

The start of the Foos has been written about almost as much as the end of his previous group: how, in the aftermath of Kurt Cobain's death, he recorded a bunch of songs he'd been writing during his time in Nirvana; how those songs ▷



Those about to rock: Foo Fighters at London Stadium, June 2018.

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS; INSET: ROSS HALFIN

RAMI JAFFEE

The keyboard player was the last to become a member of the band – after a 14-year probation with them.

You went to the same school that Slash and the Red Hot Chili Peppers went to, Fairfax High. Does every kid who goes there end up in a band?
I was playing the Sunset Strip and all these wacky goth clubs while I was still in school. My first band, Daisy Chamber, were getting demo deals, but nothing panned out. By college I was like: "Fuck this, I've been doing it for six years." During high school it was definitely: "Come on, where's my fucking record deal?!"

You were the last one to join the Foo Fighters, in 2005.
Yeah. And I finally became a full-time member in 2017!

That's quite a long probation period.
Ha! Yeah. But I guess it's all about patience.

Where did you first meet Dave?
I was with The Wallflowers, and it was December 2002 or 2003, and we were in between tours. I went up to DC to spend Christmas with the girl I was dating. It was maybe on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, and she gets a text: "Oh, Dave and Lisa want us to pop over." "Dave and Lisa who?" "Dave and Lisa Grohl." So we got over there, and it's Dave and his sister Lisa and their mother. He put it together who I was as soon as I walked in: "You're Rami Jaffee? I was talking to our management about doing an acoustic record: 'You should get Rami to come in and add keys and classic-rock that shit up'."

Were you a Nirvana or Foo Fighters fan before you joined?
On one of the first Wallflowers tours, our manager gave us a copy of the Nirvana record [*Nevermind*]. We listened to it in the van. And we're like The Band – organ, piano, some guitars. We listened to that record top to bottom and went: "Oh fuck, this is the time to grow the beard and put on the fucking funny hats." But we loved it. It had some kind of truth.

What was your first gig with the Foos like for you?
I remember walking on stage and hearing this dude in the audience go: "Rami!" Having played Wallflowers shows with five thousand females and two males in the crowd, it's like: "Oh, there's dudes here."

What's Dave Grohl like as a boss.
Oh, he's great. He's like Camp Counsellor, but he has all these crazy ideas. "Let's do a movie in all these cities." Or "Why don't we get Paul Stanley and David Lee Roth to come and play on stage?" There's things where you think: "That just sounds fucking crazy." But it's contagious.

Can you say no to Dave?
[Laughing] You *can* – then you can find yourself another gig.

If I joined the Foo Fighters tomorrow, what survival tip would you give me?
Just plug your nose and dive in. You'll enjoy it.

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

"YOU *CAN* SAY NO TO DAVE – THEN YOU CAN FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER GIG."

RAMI JAFFEE

became a debut album that was part cathartic exercise, part emotional life raft; how he brought in Pat Smear, Nirvana's touring guitarist and co-founder of original LA punk rockers The Germs, along with bassist Nate Mendel and drummer William Goldsmith (long-since replaced by Taylor Hawkins) to turn this literal solo project into a band.

"When we started the Foo Fighters I was twenty-six years old," he says. "In 1994 I had some sort of personal awakening or revelation or epiphany that life is worth living every single day. The intention of this band was to look forward to life."

The Foo Fighters began their first tour in April 1995. Rather than kick things off with a triumphant, headline-grabbing tour of their own, Grohl opted to open for US underground rock mainstay Mike Watt on a 42-date tour, travelling from city to city in a red splitter van they bought especially for it, earning 750 dollars a day between them.

"It was the toughest itinerary to this day that I've ever had in my entire life," says Grohl. "He'd have eight shows on, one day off, eight shows on, one day off. Sometimes multiple shows on the same day. Sometimes two cities in the same day. When we came home from that tour, everybody had pneumonia, everybody lost fucking thirty pounds."

In that situation, most people in Grohl's shoes would have thought: "Hang on, I used to be the drummer in Nirvana. What the hell am I doing this for?"

"No," he says. "I thought: 'Hang on, I used to be the drummer in Nirvana. That's *exactly* why I should be doing this like this.' Because after that, every fucking tour was a cakewalk.'"

Despite their attempts to keep it low-key and under control, the Foo Fighters' career trajectory hit an upswing pretty fast. While their first album took people by surprise (the drummer from Nirvana can do *this*?), follow-up *There Is Nothing Left To Lose* proved it was no fluke (that album remains one of the best things Grohl has ever been involved in, up to and including Nirvana).

Since then the Foos haven't looked back. There have been bumps in the road, of course. At the start of the millennium they came perilously close to ending after a disillusioned Grohl joined Queens

TAYLOR HAWKINS

It ain't easy replacing a band's original drummer. And also being the drummer in a shit-hot drummer's band.

When Dave pitched this record as the Foos' *Let's Dance*, what did you think?
If anyone wanted to make a pure rock'n'roll record, it would be me. So I was a little hesitant at first. When Dave said: "Let's make a tape loop," I was mortified – I'm a drummer. But then I thought: "Well, that's what Queen did on *The Game*." I was still a little on edge about it: "Is it too modern? Too dancey?" Then my wife heard it and she was like: "No, dude, this is a fucking fun record."

Where did you meet Dave for the first time?
I met him at this [LA radio station] KROQ Christmas show when I was playing with Alanis Morrissette. I was really nervous to go talk to him, cos I thought he was super-cool and I'm a dork. But he saw me walk past and went: "Dude, get over here!" When I first saw them I thought: "I want to be part of that." But I wanted to be part of a hundred bands.

Was it a done deal that you'd get the job after original drummer William Goldsmith left?
When I hung out with them, they seemed like a band, and I thought William would be their drummer for ever. But I guess he couldn't handle it. And there was a time when I almost couldn't handle it. You sit down and you've got Dave Grohl, this amazing musician and amazing drummer, in the control room. He's trying to be nice – and he *is* nice – but he also knows what he wants. I always say recording a drum track for the Foo Fighters takes a week off my life.

You were friends with Rush drummer the late Neil Peart. What was he like?
He was a hundred per cent not like me. He was well-spoken and thoughtful and bookish and a little bit socially awkward. I didn't know him super-well, but I knew him well enough. I was lucky to share some fun moments with him.

Dave famously fell off stage and broke his leg at a gig in Gothenberg in 2015. What do you remember about it?
He just disappeared in front of us. I got up and walked over. I knew he was hurt, but he was laughing so I knew he hadn't broken his neck. He went: "Dude, I think I just broke my fucking leg." But he went into full 'on with the show' mode: "Just play a couple of covers, I'll be right back up." So we did that, and the crowd were cheering us on, but we were like, we don't know if Dave is coming back. Then, sure enough, there he was. It was this weird moment of triumph.

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS; INSET: ROSS HALFIN

Of The Stone Age as drummer on the latter's 2002 album *Songs For The Deaf*. "The seven-year itch," as he calls it today. (There have been other, less existentially threatening side-projects, including the singer's collaboration with Josh Homme and John Paul Jones in Them Crooked Vultures, and his love-letter to underground metal Probot.).

Throughout it all, the Foos haven't just endured, they've got bigger. Songs such as *Learn To Fly*, *All My Life*, *Times Like These* and *Best Of You* have become part of the Great American Rock'N'Roll Songbook. Scenes have come and gone – nu metal, garage rock, emo – but the Foo Fighters have endured, a genre of their own.

Asking Dave Grohl why he thinks his band have become rock's modern standard bearers isn't much use. "I think the Foo Fighters have, over the years, become one of the best live bands in the world," is as much as he'll toot his own horn.

Thankfully, other people have done it for him.

A papal blessing of sorts came in July 2008, when the Foos headlined two nights at London's 80,000-capacity Wembley Stadium. On the second night, they were joined by Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones for versions of Led Zeppelin's *Rock And Roll* and *Ramble On*. The minute Page and Jones walked out on stage, several things went through Grohl's head.

"The main thing was: 'Don't shit the bed, Dave,'" he says. "Don't fuck up these songs with two guys from one of my favourite bands. There was a moment towards the end of the show where it started to rain and I got really choked up. I thought: 'Here we are, we've survived all this time, having started this band with this demo tape and the old red van, and now we're in a stadium full of people singing every word to every song…'"

When asked if the Foo Fighters are as good as Led Zeppelin, he looks like he can't believe he's just been asked the question.

"No."

"WHEN I FIRST SAW THEM, I THOUGHT: 'I WANT TO BE PART OF THAT.'"
TAYLOR HAWKINS

As good as Kiss?

"[Long pause, possibly diplomatic] Different."

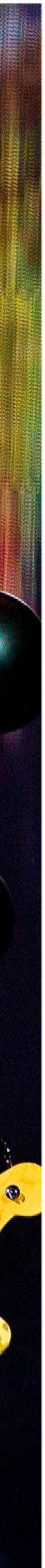
As good as Bon Jovi?

"No," he says, recoiling. "That's asking a lot."

If you're thinking of throwing a birthday party, you could do worse than take a leaf out of Dave Grohl's book. The Foo Fighters played the LA Forum in January 2015, a few days before their frontman turned 46. "We decided to do the show last-minute, and it was like: 'Let's call some of my friends,'" he says.

The friends they called for their celebratory, covers-heavy set included (checks list) Slash,

Sitting down on the job: Grohl on his specially made 'throne', which he later loaned to Axl Rose.



Perry Farrell, Tenacious D, Zakk Wylde, Alice Cooper, Dave Lee Roth and Paul Stanley. "It was literally me going through my phone going: 'Who do I know? Oh, Paul Stanley.' My daughter goes to school with his daughter. I see him every fucking Friday in assembly. We sit there and we talk about pyrotechnics."

It's funny how things turn out sometimes. It's unlikely that Dave Grohl, Foghat-loving punk rock brat, would ever have envisaged one day playing *Rock And Roll All Nite* with Paul Stanley and *Panama* with Dave Lee Roth, or Led Zeppelin songs with Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones, or blasting through the opening of *2112* with members of Rush at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, or backing Mick Jagger on *Saturday Night Live*, or getting a surprise call to go and jam with Prince. But that's where Dave Grohl ends up. Repeatedly. Sure, he's living the dream of every rock'n'roll fanboy and girl, but he's also become the modern equivalent of the very people he's rubbing shoulders with – a bona fide A-list rock star, just like Mick Jagger or Diamond Dave. He's one of us, but he's undeniably one of them as well.

Dave Grohl and Paul Stanley during Grohl's birthday bash at The Forum in Inglewood, California, January 10, 2015.

There's one more anecdote about Dave Grohl's A-list rock'n'roll connections worth squeezing in, because: a) it's a doozy, and b) it illustrates just how much his peers like and respect him.

Back in 1992, when Grohl was still in Nirvana, there was an almighty backstage bust-up involving Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love on one side and Axl Rose on the other. Names were called, vitriol was spat, portacabins were rocked. It was a real pick-your-side moment.

"We were young and were fucked up and in this bizarre fantasy world of rock'n'roll," he says. "We were fucking kids. And the years went by and we all realised: 'Come on, man, life is too short.'"

Grohl bumped into various members of Guns N' Roses in the ensuing two decades, and even appeared on Slash's debut solo album in 2010. Then in 2017 he got a call from Duff McKagan: "Have you still got the throne?" Duff was talking about the throne of guitars that he'd had made after breaking his leg when he fell off the stage at a gig in Sweden in 2015. Axl had busted his foot during GN'R's reunion show at the Roxy club in LA, and their comeback tour was in jeopardy. Could GN'R borrow the throne? Grohl could have said no. But naturally he said yes. And saved the biggest rock'n'roll tour of the decade.

"So Axl took it out with Guns N' Roses, then he took it out with AC/DC, and then all of a sudden I became the guy you come to if you break a limb on tour, like Thrones R Us."

How did Axl thank him? A box of chocolates? A bunch of flowers?

"He had Slash go pick me a guitar. And he picked me an early-60s Gibson ES 335 Dot, which to this day is the nicest fucking guitar I have ever played in my life. It was an incredibly kind and classy gesture, and I was very appreciative."

"I THINK THE FOO FIGHTERS HAVE, OVER THE YEARS, BECOME ONE OF THE BEST LIVE BANDS IN THE WORLD."

DAVE GROHL

The circle was properly closed in June 2018, when the Foo Fighters brought out Axl, Slash and Duff to join the band to play a cover of Guns' *It's So Easy* at a festival in Italy. "Dude, that was the longest, most sustained crowd scream I have ever experienced in my entire life," says Grohl. "It was fucking incredible."

You might be reading this and thinking: "Dave Grohl is one lucky bastard." And in many ways he is. But you don't get to be that lucky a bastard without having determination, dedication and big dollop of talent.

If you want to get a sense of the way Grohl really operates, check out *Play*, the 22-minute instrumental solo track he released under his own name in 2018.

"A lot of that had to do with me proving to myself that I could do it," he says. "That was something I had never even attempted – a twenty-three-minute-long song where I had to play the instruments from beginning to end without fucking it up. It was like an obstacle course in my mind. Some kids love playing videogames, some kids love playing football. To me, that's my sport – let me see if I can pull this off. That runs as a thread through my entire career. Let's see if I can actually be the singer of the band. Let's see if we can actually play a fucking festival. Let's see if we can play Wembley Stadium… Every step of the way, I just want to see if we can do it. And once you achieve that, you just push it out the way and go: 'What's next?'"

For all his band's massive success, and the underlying ambition that drives it, Dave Grohl always defaults to his old friend Lemmy in matters of rock'n'roll. And let's face it, there are worse people to have as your spirit guide.

"I always appreciated and respected him as someone who was entirely real," he says of the late Motörhead leader. "There was no bullshit there. He was straight, he was to-the-point. And he had an outlaw glimmer in his eye that showed his sense of humour. And I think it's important in this weird world of playing in a band that your sense of humour stays intact. Taking this shit too seriously can be the death of any band." ❶

Medicine At Midnight is scheduled for release on February 5 via Roswell Records/Columbia Records and will be reviewed next issue.

GETTY x2; INSET: DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

★ HIGH HOPES

Kills Birds

Intent on "making music that sounds and feels sincere", their gutsy modern take on alt.rock is deservedly turning heads.

KILL BIRDS: MICHELLE LAINE

There's a moment on Kills Birds' incendiary self-titled debut when vocalist Nina Ljeti has to stop and catch her breath. Having just bellowed herself hoarse as *Volcano* – just one of the album's many standout tracks – reaches its spiky crescendo, it's about as close as you can get to one of the band's frenetic live shows when listening at home.

Combining the hungry anthemia of Pixies and Sonic Youth's cerebral art-punk cool, the LA quartet's sound is all blazing energy and jagged angles. They've caused a buzz with their modern take on 80s and 90s alt (no surprise, perhaps, that our guest editors Foo Fighters picked them to appear in this issue) but the band started out as many band's do – as a bit of fun.

"Before the music that is Kills Birds, we were writing R&B tracks," explains Ljeti. "Then something shifted. One day we tried to write a serious song, and that became *High* [a track on their debut]."

"There was a genuine curiosity of what it would sound like to put that song into a live setting," continues guitarist Jacob Loeb. "We just quickly got a couple of dudes in the room with us, who turned out to be our band. It felt like a really nice transfer of energy."

One of their early LA shows was witnessed by Marissa Nadle and Ariel Pink producer Justin Raisen, who threw his hat in the ring to make their debut record. Determined to capture what he'd seen on stage, the album (released in 2019) was recorded in eight frantic hours of sheer emotion and adrenaline, a process Ljeti describes as "freeing". "There was no talk about how we were going to mic it," says Loeb. "I don't even remember how we did it, it was just about how we *felt*. At the core of our sound, I think our intention is making music that sounds and feels sincere."

Kills Birds' music thrives on that kind of chaos. "Most of the lyrics have to do with emotional unrest," says Ljeti. "Particularly romantic emotional unrest. Jacob's been through a lot of those moments with me. I can't even count the number of times he's seen me cry about somebody! Then there's a lot of questioning of self on the record too. When we were writing these songs it was a period of my life as a woman where you're coming to terms with who you are and what your femininity is; how you define your worth in relation to how other people see your worth, which is a very important distinction to come to terms with."

As a Bosnian immigrant, Ljeti's own experiences have played a huge part in the development of the band's fraught sound.

"My father was a Muslim solider in the military, and my mom took his last name," she explains. "The consequences of that in that war was they were exterminating Muslims. My dad was very afraid for us. He majorly orchestrated this escape plan for us to get out of the country. He escaped on a helicopter, he threatened his general with a gun. It's a whole plot of a movie."

> **"My dad escaped on a helicopter, he threatened his general with a gun. It's a whole plot of a movie."**
>
> **Nina Ljeti**

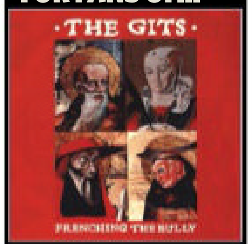
Ljeti was only just over a year old when her family made it to Canada, but she admits that growing up she often felt like an outsider.

"I grew up with very Bosnian parents who instilled Bosnian values in me," she says. "Ideas of socialism and caring for others before the self. I found it difficult to understand certain aspects of American culture. I think that's where that discomfort and confusion and rage started. It made writing songs a lot easier because that was building up."

Kills Birds have won themselves fans in high places. Sonic Youth founder Kim Gordon described their single *Worthy Girl* as "hot as fuck", while Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl became so enamoured with their debut that he offered to let the band record their (as yet unreleased) follow-up in his 606 Studio in San Fernando Valley. "He took a liking to our music, so we met once, and that's how our friendship began," says Ljeti. "He stopped by a couple of times while Jacob was doing guitar overdubs."

"It just so happened that that day we had discovered the guitarist from Motörhead's [Phil Campbell's] Flying V was just lying around the studio," Loeb adds, laughing. "I started tracking with it, and it sounded so fucking mean and good. So were overdubbing guitars with this black, skull-encrusted Motörhead guitar, as Dave Grohl walks in. It was a pretty unforgettable, 'pinch me' moment." **DL**

FOR FANS OF...



"Few vocalists have inspired me as much as Mia Zapata," Nina Ljeti, says of the singer [who was murdered in 1993, aged 27] in short-lived Seattle punks The Gits. "Her voice was gorgeous: deep, gritty, and honest. There is something immortal about the way she sings on this record, she was that good."

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY
DAVE GROHL

Kills Birds are a younger band from Los Angeles that play a very jagged but melodic punk rock/post-punk. I love the energy. The vocalist, Nina, has a really commanding presence on stage and is writing from a very personal and vulnerable place.

They remind me of a band I would have seen in Olympia, Washington, when I first joined Nirvana in 1990. They're fucking tight and they're fucking strong and their riffs are heavy and cool. But there's that balanced dynamic of this really powerful female presence with a band that's just pounding behind.

One of their songs, *Volcano*, off their last record, kind of influenced one of our new songs, *Cloudspotter*. And I think they're fucking great.

RIP

Thank you and good night.

Tony Hooper
September 14, 1939 – November 18, 2020

Stawbs frontman Dave Cousins has paid tribute to the folk-rockers' co-founding guitarist, who passed away following an operation for oral cancer several months ago. Hooper was 81 years old. He was with the British group from 1964 to 1972 and 1983 to 1993. "Without Tony there would have been no Strawberry Hill Boys – no Strawbs!" said Cousins.

Hal Ketchum
April 9, 1953 – November 23, 2020

Celebrated country musician and singer Hal Ketchum has died at the age 67 as a result of complications from dementia. Born in New York, Ketchum moved to Nashville following the release of his first album, 1989's *Threadbare Alibis*. He retired from touring in 2018 after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Jim Tucker
October 17, 1946 – November 12, 2020

Jim Tucker, rhythm guitarist with 60s band The Turtles, has died of unknown causes at 74. The Turtles sold more than a million copies of their hit single *Happy Together* and were inducted into the Grammy Hall Of Fame. Having tired of touring and recording, Tucker quit The Turtles in 1968.

Alec Baillie
Died November 10, 2020

Manhattan-born Alec Baillie played bass guitar for several US ska-punk acts, including Agent 99 and Leftöver Crack. His songs were of a radical leftist nature, opposing religion, capitalism and authority. Age and cause of death are yet to be revealed.

Dan Morrison
Died December 1, 2020

Dan Morrison was the drummer and founding member of the Melbourne-based ska-pop-punks Area-7. Having started life as a Madness tribute band, Area-7 released four albums between 1995 and 2005. Morrison died from head trauma after an accidental fall.

Eric Hall
January 11, 1947 – November 16, 2020

The publicist who famously booked the Sex Pistols' '76 appearance on the *Today* show has died of the coronavirus at 73. "The world has lost man of brilliance and charisma," said Steve Harley, whose Cockney Rebel records were promoted by Hall.

The Royal Mint has had launched into space a £5 coin celebrating **David Bowie**. Featuring the *Aladdin Sane* lightning bolt motif, it orbited the Earth before returning to terra firma to become a competition prize.

Courtney Love has once again hinted of a reunion of **Hole**. Love told the *NME*: "It's something I'd love to do and [I've] been taking guitar lessons over Zoom during lockdown. I'm writing again, so we'll see." Hole's most recent album, *Nobody's Daughter*, was released 10 years ago.

The final album from former Uriah Heep keyboard player **Ken Hensley** is released posthumously by Cherry Red on March 5. *My Book Of Answers* was made in conjunction with the Russian poet Vladimir Emelin. The label also releases *Eleventeen*, an album by another deceased former member of Heep, drummer Lee Kerslake, on February 26.

Michigan-based hard rockers **Greta Van Fleet** (pictured) release their second album, *The Battle At Garden's Gate*, on April 16. It's preceded by a new single, *Age Of Machine*, that's available now.

The band formed from the ashes of The Amorettes and Tequila Mockingbyrd have a new name and a rejigged line-up. Now called **The Hot Damn!**, they are guitarist Laurie Buchanan, guitarist/singer Gill Montgomery, bassist Lzi Hayes and drummer Josie O'Toole.

Campbell "not proud" of how he left The Temperance Movement

TTM's former frontman tells *Classic Rock* about his departure, and introduces new band the Byson Family.

Phil Campbell has spoken to *Classic Rock* about his departure from The Temperance Movement and the launch of a relatively new group he's in, the Byson Family, who are set to release a debut album in the coming months. From the outside, the singer's resignation, in January 2020, came out of the blue, but for Campbell the writing had been on the wall for more than a year.

"In fact it went back further than that, to the point when [Luke] Potashnick left," Campbell explains, referring to The Temperance Movement's co-founding guitarist who quit in 2015. "That gutted me and the rest of the band, because Potashnick was the spiritual father of the whole thing. As our taste maker he had spent a couple of years luring me into joining, and I did so to be in a band with him."

Following The Temperance Movement's first trip to the United States, Potashnick was replaced by Matt White, a friend of the band. Campbell cites that same US tour, during which they supported the Rolling Stones, as another signpost to his own departure.

"I had just become a father, and while there I turned forty, and the minute we got back Luke said he was leaving," he explains. "That was horrible."

Exactly a year later, following TTM's second album *White Bear* and a second North American tour, drummer Damon Wilson, another co-founder, departed.

"Maybe those guys decided that they didn't want to be in a band with me because I'm a bit wayward, I don't know," Campbell says. "But my attitude is: we're in a fucking rock band – it's not the same as an office job. You're allowed certain freedoms, that's why I went into it."

Though TTM released a third album, 2018's *A Deeper Cut*, Damon Wilson's exit marked "the beginning of the end" for Campbell in the band. "For me, the best things about the band were Luke and Damon," he reasons.

In terms of TTM's music, things were changing. As the band became heavier, their singer started to drift away. "After seven years with the band I didn't enjoy screaming at the top of my lungs," he explains. "It was difficult for me to leave, because I was the focal point of a band that a lot of people had loved and believed in. I'm not proud of the way it ended, but I had to get out."

Did the rest of the band understand your reasons?

"I think they *will*, as the Byson Family progresses," he responds after moment of thought. "I want to make music in my home town [Glasgow] and with people that I love. I don't want to sound like AC/DC. It's time to be rootsy again."

> **"I don't want to sound like AC/DC. It's time to be rootsy again."**

Joining Campbell – who now prefers to be known as Philip Seth Campbell – in the Byson Family are a bunch of friends. Bassist Mike McDaid and drummer Allan James played in the backing bands of Paulo Nutini and Jon Fratelli, while guitarist Christian Fleetwood and keyboard player Chris Russell were both part of a group called 68s.

When *Classic Rock* suggests to Campbell that the Byson Family song *Angel Of The Reckless* isn't too far removed from early Temperance Movement, he doesn't argue.

"With this band you'll get rock'n'roll, but you'll also get beautiful harmonies," he says, smiling. "We've got a piano player, which really adds to the dynamics."

The Byson Family's debut album, *Kick The Traces*, is due in the spring of 2021. And if you're wondering about the moniker: "It's very much a tip of the hat to Americana," Campbell says. "It's just a lovely, hippie-sounding name." **DL**

For further details go to www.thebysonfamily.com

GRETA VAN FLEET: ALYSSE GAFKJEN

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People Power Powers *Power Up*

Angus thanks fans for hit album.

Angus Young has thanked AC/DC fans for making the band's comeback album *Power Up* one of the most successful releases of 2020, topping charts around the world. In the UK it debuted at No.1 and was the fastest-selling album of the year. "A very big thank you to everyone who put in their time, effort and creativity to get *Power Up* to Number One!" said Angus. "Also a big shout-out to all our fans, old and new. You are, and always have been, our guiding inspiration."

The return of AC/DC, with long-serving vocalist Brian Johnson, seemingly retired bassist Cliff Williams and disgraced drummer Phil Rudd back in line-up, was among the most heart-warming stories of 2020.

The album featured material co-written by Malcolm Young, the band's co-founding rhythm guitarist, who retired from the group in 2014 and succumbed the effects of dementia three years later.

Back in December in an emotional *Classic Rock* cover story, Angus declared: "This for Mal. I always think he's still a part of it, you know? He's still with us in spirit. I still feel his presence." **DL**

Hagar: Farewell Van Halen Tour Was Being Planned

"It would've been a dream come true," says Sammy.

Sammy Hagar has confirmed that Van Halen were lining up a tour featuring all three lead singers they've had – David Lee Roth, Hagar himself and Extreme's Gary Cherone, – plus returning bassist Michael Anthony before the intervention of Edward Van Halen's declining health. The idea of a final stadium tour had been broached by VH bassist Wolfgang Van Halen following the death of his father in October.

"It [the tour] was totally on my radar," Hagar told broadcaster Eddie Trunk. "No one had confirmed any of it, but it was obviously what was gonna happen."

Roth and Hagar sharing a stage again would have been interesting, given their tempestuous relationship. "I wouldn't look forward to that only because he's not user friendly," Hagar continued, "but it would have been a blast. It [would have been] a dream come true."

Meanwhile, artist Margo Z Nahas has paid tribute to Eddie by adapting her original smoking angel artwork for Van Halen's album *1984*, adding a tear (above). Prints are available from www.vanhalen1984.com **DL**

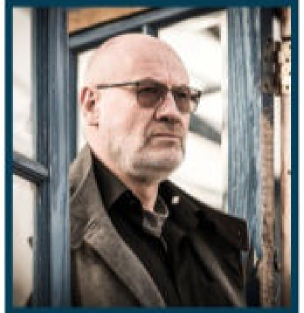
NEWS

Iron Maiden guitarist **Adrian Smith** has revealed early details of a project with guitarist/vocalist Richie Kotzen of the Winery Dogs under the moniker Smith-Kotzen. A song called *Taking My Chances* is available now and the pair have signed a deal to release an as-yet untitled album.

Saxon have recorded a covers album while in quarantine. Titled *Inspirations*, it includes versions of songs by Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, Motörhead, Thin Lizzy and AC/DC. It's released on March 19.

Guitarist **Michael Schenker** celebrates his 50th anniversary as a musician with a new album from the Michael Schenker Group on January 19. *Immortal* features vocal contributions from Ronnie Romero (Rainbow, Vandenberg), Joe Lynn Turner (Rainbow, Deep Purple) and Primal Fear's Ralf Scheepers.

The **Dead Daisies**, currently fronted by Glenn Hughes, release their fifth studio album, Holy Ground, on January 22. It was produced by Ben Grosse.



Fish (pictured) has made his show recorded at the Lemon Tree in Aberdeen in March 2019 available to stream for free as a fundraiser for his out-of-work road crew. The show kicked off a tour that was subsequently axed due to the pandemic.

The impact of covid-19 is expected to have cost the USA's live music industry more than $30 billion (£22.5 billion) in 2020.

WELCOME BACK

The Empty Hearts

The American supergroup return with their second album of classy pop-rock, and big-name guests.

Combining vintage rock'n'roll chops, stylish sixties sensibilities and a timeless melodic power-pop sheen, American supergroup the Empty Hearts return with a class-dripping second album *The Second Album*. With a line-up comprised of Elliot Easton (The Cars, guitar), Clem Burke (Blondie, drums), Wally Palmar (The Romantics, guitar and vocals) and Andy Babiuk (The Chesterfield Kings, bass) here's a garage-rock combo with reputation to spare – and, as Clem Burke reveals, friends in high places.

Other than an affinity for classically constructed beat music, what brought the four of you together?

Andy used to work in a guitar shop that everyone would pass through on their travels and was friends with all of us. I've known Elliot since the eighties. We tried to form a band with Doug Fieger of The Knack a few years back, and knew we'd work together again one day. Andy hooked us all up, we got together, played some songs from when we were kids – Kinks songs, Who songs – and the chemistry was there.

> "All four of us share a particular rock'n'roll aesthetic."

You obviously enjoy a shared musical vision, and there's a distinct progression from first album to the second: sixties feel imbued with seventies technique, the spirit of The Byrds with the sparkle of ELO.

That's the main reason for the four of us all getting together, we share a particular rock'n'roll aesthetic. We're all journeymen musicians who've had some success, and when we get together in the studio we work really well. Influences-wise we did expand things; the first album's more sixties-oriented, and the second more rooted in the seventies, especially some of the more hard rock songs. We've also got the Uptown Horns on *Well, Look At You*, trying to channel Stax, Elliot doing a Steve Cropper guitar thing on it.

One obvious difference between this album and the debut is the absence of former Small Faces and Faces keyboard player Ian McLagan?

Mac passing away [in 2014] was terrible. We were actually just about to do a gig with him. I was listening to Radio Caroline on the internet, [Small Faces'] *Tin Soldier* came on, and I simultaneously got a text saying that Mac had passed. I'd previously worked with him and Nigel Harrison from Blondie on a record with BP Fallon. So I rang him up, and he was kind enough to do a session for us. We were honoured to have him on the first record.

How did Ringo Starr come to guest on *Remember Days Like These?*

We cut the track, then thought it would be great to have Ringo play on it. Having Mac on the first album kind of set a precedent to have someone of high esteem guest on our records. Wally toured with Ringo's All-Stars for a couple of years, so rang him up and he consented. We co-wrote the song,so I was very happy to have Sir Richard Starkey take my place on the track.

Obviously it's very difficult to make plans right now, but ideally what's next for the Empty Hearts?

We've done a bunch of videos to promote the record, but it's very unfortunate that we're not able to tour, so we're writing. We've a Blondie UK tour booked in for next November, so hopefully that will also include gigs by the Empty Hearts. **IF**

The Empty Hearts' The Second Album is out now via Wicked Cool.

THE EMPTY HEARTS: ROB SHANAHAN/PRESS. ANGEL WITH TEARS: MARGO Z NAHAS

★ HIGH HOPES

Bad Nerves

Garage-rock pace and power-pop melodies collide, and the results can be infectious.

Bobby Nerves is an adrenaline junkie. A high-speed drummer in previous bands, and having grown up singing in a Bowie-loving household in Colchester, the Bad Nerves frontman spent years feeling torn between a love of catchy power-pop melodies and the fast-paced heaviness offered by punk and rock. It was only when his current band Bad Nerves assembled that he decided to combine the two.

"I used to think: "Right, I've got to write songs that are three and half minutes'," he tells us. "I'd gotten a bit disillusioned. I'd started to think maybe I'm just shit at this. But this was the first time I stopped worrying about all that. I just thought: 'What do I want to hear?' 'What feels good when I play or write it?' I started to really enjoy the whole process. It's so exciting to write in-your-face, balls-out rock'n'roll."

That excitement bursts out of Bad Nerves' self-titled debut album, a gleeful hit-list of garage rock-come-power-pop firecrackers. All sugar, speed and infectious chaos, it's the stuff of dreams for fans of Ramones and *Caught By The Fuzz*-era Supergrass.

"I wanted *every* song to be wicked," he says. "We've written some shit songs, don't get me wrong, but we don't put those ones out. I just wanted to love every song; I didn't want to feel like anything dragged. I want people to want to play it again. I like songs to start immediately, and I've gotten so bad that when I listen to something with a long intro or something I have to remind myself to be patient!"

Having assembled from various pockets of Essex and East London, Bad Nerves started jamming out ideas in 2016. Songs emerged from breakneck drum parts, spurred on by the spirits of The Clash, David Bowie, Ramones and (00s American garage punk) Jay Reatard. "That stuff is so trashy and DIY-recorded, but so melodic too," Bobby says of the latter. "It was adrenaline-packed but hooky. That opened up a whole new world to me."

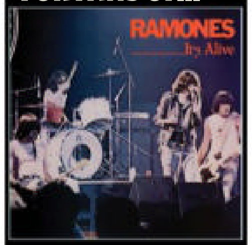
A furtive first few months resulted in about half the songs on the album (and many more). Originally the plan was simply to record and move on. "But in the end we were so excited about the songs we thought we have to try and play this live!" Accordingly, the next task was to transfer the energy of their first demos to the recordings without sacrificing character and spontaneity.

"I wanted it to have that sort of power you hear on these big records, but I still wanted it to have the grit of a live band," Bobby says. "I still like it to be tight and together, but I feel like a lot of the magic is in the mess. I think that's what a lot of music is missing."

It's a mind-set that fuels their live shows too. "You just go on stage, count in and don't stop until the set's over," he says, looking slightly wistful as talk turns to gig nostalgia. "That adrenaline's unmatched. It's an escape from reality. I wish everybody could feel that satisfaction." **PG**

Bad Nerves is out now via Killing Moon Records.

FOR FANS OF...



"That to me is like the holy grail," Bobby enthuses about Ramones' *It's Alive*. "They go on stage and go: "Hey, we're the Ramones. It's good to see you!' and then 'one, two, three, four!' and the whole set is like that. We actually do a couple of Ramones covers. That to me is how I love a rock or punk gig to be – slam, slam, slam!"

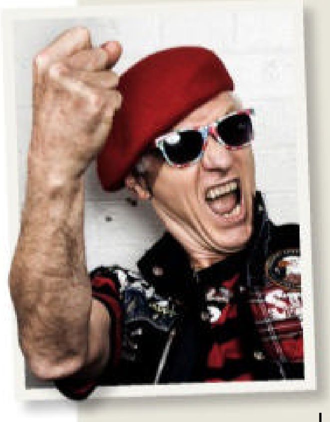
"It's so exciting to write in-your-face, balls-out rock'n'roll."

MY FIRST LOVE

The Groundhogs
THANK CHRIST FOR THE BOMB
By Captain Sensible

The Damned guitarist on the 1970 'psychedelic punk' masterpiece that changed his life.

Thank Christ For The Bomb is the most amazing album I've ever heard. One minute it's a full-on power trio playing this manic, almost punk rock – angry, anti-establishment, anti-war stuff – and the next minute it drops right down into this extremely quiet and subtle finger-picking stuff. Tony McPhee, the guitarist, is an absolute genius. He was the British Hendrix, y'know? He could do soaring feedback solos, and really took the whole guitar-playing thing as far as he could. And what he doesn't know about the blues isn't worth knowing.



Thank Christ came out in 1970. I got it then, and I must have worn out about three vinyl copies over the years. I used to play it all the time. When I got into songwriting myself I was grateful to be influenced by that stuff. I thought of it as psychedelic punk – them and Soft Machine and Syd Barrett. The problem with the expression 'prog rock' is that it's been sullied by the likes of Yes and Genesis and ELP. The Groundhogs were probably the finest example of prog rock you can possibly get – a mixture of blues and psychedelia and pop that's never been bettered.

Thank Christ is a perfect album. There's not a filler track on it and the sequence is brilliant. It's also as moody as hell. **SR**

The Damned's latest EP The Rockfield Files is out now via Spinefarm Records.

NEWS

Bob Dylan has sold the publishing rights to his back catalogue to Universal Music in a deal that's reported to be worth around $300m (£225m). David Crosby, who says "streaming stole my record money" and that he has "a family and a mortgage" to consider, is in the process of doing the same thing.

A new super-deluxe edition of **Black Sabbath**'s 1972 album *Vol 4* is to be released in two remastered formats on February 12 via BMG.

Current Queensrÿche frontman **Todd La Torre** releases his first solo album, *Rejoice In The Suffering*, on February 5 via Rat Pak Records.

Deep Purple, whose most recent album *Whoosh!* is less than six months old, are using lockdown productively by returning to the studio. "We're gonna try to do another album [in 2021]", bassist Roger Glover told a Finnish fan during a virtual meet-and-greet. "We're experimenting with stuff."

GETTY

Look out for a new biopic about **Heart**. The as-yet-untitled film is being written and directed by Carrie Brownstein, an actress and also half of the indie-rock duo Sleater-Kinney.

Meanwhile, the debut solo album from Heart guitarist **Nancy Wilson** (pictured), *You And Me*, is due in early 2021. It features contributions by Sammy Hagar, Guns N' Roses bassist Duff McKagan and Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins.

WELCOME BACK

Lonely The Brave

Guitarist Mark Trotter on mental health, tomahawks and the fight back from the brink.

Seven years ago, talking to *Classic Rock* Lonely The Brave guitarist Mark Trotter joked about a nightmare career trajectory where the Cambridge band's records "fell on their arse" and the band members "murdered each other". Well, not quite. But between industry burnings and the recent departure of their singer David Jakes due to mental health issues, it's hardly been plain sailing. Fortunately, with the arrival of singer Jack Bennett and the epic shimmer-fuzz of third album *The Hope List*, things are looking decidedly rosier for the band.

The Hope List didn't have an easy birth.
Not at all. I guess a lot of bands would've given up when their singer leaves, but that was never even on the cards. And then we thought the pandemic was the most Lonely The Brave thing that could possibly happen. It was, like: "Oh, a global pandemic? Right, let's make a new album with a new singer!" It's typical us.

"A global pandemic? Right, let's make a new album."

How would you describe the musical vibe of the record?
We always used to think we wrote depressing songs, that they were always really downbeat. But actually, when you listen back there's always an element of hope. Jack has really tapped into that. My favourite is *The Harrow*. For some reason that song reminds me of *The Last Of The Mohicans*. Just imagine Daniel Day-Lewis running with a tomahawk while you listen to it.

What are the songs about?
I lost my dad this year. He had an aneurysm, completely out of the blue. He was a fighting-fit sixty-two-year-old. So from Jack's perspective, *Distant Light* is more about lockdown, but from mine it's that my dad is in an ICU ward and I can't go and see him.

What happened with David Jakes?
Dave is a very unique man, an amazingly talented guy. And he has demons, as we all do. Honestly, I think he made the right decision. I think the majority of us have probably been there at some stage in this band, but never quite got to that point where we're: "I can't do this any more."

What was the problem – the intensity of band life?
I think so. There was a massive amount of anxiety that we all felt. Day to day life was awful, for a long time. When you're doing tours that should be the most exciting of your life, but you're waking up every day thinking: "For fuck's sake." That's not fun.

What was causing the anxiety?
Label stuff. That's the main thing, really. We were signed to a major deal for the first record, then things start getting taken out of your control. One minute, you're being told you need to sound like Deftones, the next minute like R.E.M. Now we're in a much better place. We've changed labels, changed management.

How excited are you about playing live again?
We were in Brussels on the night of the Bataclan attack [in 2015]. We were playing Berlin the next day. We drove there not even knowing if the show was going ahead. In the audience, you could feel the tension. Everyone was like: "Shit, should we be here?" But within ten seconds of the opening song you could feel the weight of the room just fly up to the ceiling and everyone lost their minds. So I can only imagine it's going to feel like that – but even more so. I can't wait. **HY**

The Hope List is released January 22 via Easy Life Records.

LONELY THE BRAVE: CARLA MUNDY/PRESS; SENSIBLE: WILL IRELAND/FUTURE NETWORK PLC

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David Bowie
Changes

How a young Bowie's artistic manifesto was captured in three and a half perfect minutes.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

In the spring of 1971, when David Bowie wrote the now classic line *'Turn and face the strange'*, he created a mission statement for the next decade of his career.

At the age of 24, seven years into that career, three albums and *'a million dead end streets'* behind him, Bowie had been brooding on the sidelines as friendly rivals Marc Bolan and Elton John started to find stardom. Determined not to be left behind, he pooled his creative strengths and began writing songs that were "more immediate".

"In the early seventies it really started to all come together for me as to what it was that I liked doing," Bowie told me in 2003. "After I came back from my first trip to America, I had a new perception of songwriting, and it was about a collision of musical styles. I found that I couldn't easily adopt brand loyalty, or genre loyalty; I wasn't an R&B artist, I wasn't a folk artist, and I didn't see the point any more in trying to be that purist about it. What my true style was is that I loved the idea of putting Little Richard with Jacques Brel and the Velvet Underground backing them. What would that sound like? Nobody was doing that. At least not in the same way."

Changes began, he once said, as "a parody of a nightclub song". But it quickly became one of his new hybrids, fusing cocktail jazz, boogie woogie and beat poetry to a Beatlesque chorus. Significantly, as Bowie worked on the song – and all the material for the *Hunky Dory* album – he would often swap his usual instrument, a Harptone 12-string acoustic guitar, for the ancient grand piano at Haddon Hall where he lived.

"He loved that piano," Angie Bowie told me. "David was a fantastic musician, because his approach was not studied, it was by ear. He had an ability to pluck a song from those first moments when he played with an instrument. Writing on the piano opened up his possibilities, because of its association with so many kinds of music – classical, cabaret, every style."

Listening to Bowie's home demo of *Changes*, the song is all there, although his playing is a bit plodding. That's why he brought in session ace Rick Wakeman to play piano and embellish and add more of a nuanced touch to the recording.

"David knew what he wanted to do," Wakeman tells *Classic Rock*. "He knew how the music needed to be and he would pick musicians that he felt could achieve what it was he was after. I went to his house, and he had his guitar and he played all of the songs, and every single one was a winner. I took some manuscript paper and I was writing stuff down, and I stopped and said: 'Do you know what you've got here? This is the finest collection of songs, and I tell you what, I don't have any money but if I did I would put it all on saying that this particular record – which he already told me was going to be called *Hunky Dory* – will still be around and important long after you and I are gone.' And he laughed. I said: 'I'm serious.' He gave me total freedom to play what I liked, really. The vamping bit in *Changes* was his idea because that's how he wrote the song, so that's how it stayed. Sometimes when there's something simplistic, if it works then keep it."

Sessions for *Hunky Dory* at London's Trident Studios ran through June and July 1971. Bowie, his musicians and producer Ken Scott worked from two p.m. to midnight, Monday to Saturday, with quick breaks for tea, sandwiches and the occasional bottle of wine. There was a sense of excitement on the sessions, fuelled by Bowie's new material.

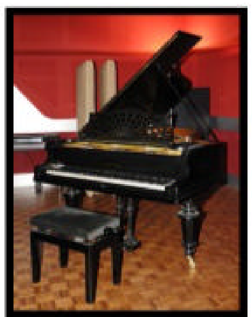
"Honestly, I didn't think he had these songs in him," recalled drummer Woody Woodmansey. "They were more structured. He'd obviously focused more as a writer, yet he'd managed to keep his unique approach, especially lyrically, while streamlining everything."

"*Hunky Dory* was the first recording session I ever did in my life, and just to be in a studio was amazing," the late bassist Trevor Bolder said. "Our approach was very off-the-top-or-our-heads. We'd go in, David would play us a song – often one we hadn't heard – we'd run through it once and then take it. No time to think about what you're going to play, you'd have to do it there and then. In some respects it's nerve-racking, but it gives a certain feel. If you play a song too many times in the

"David was a fantastic musician. He had an ability to pluck a song from those first moments when he played with an instrument."

Changes helped Bowie's rapidly rising star get higher.

GETTY



PERFECT PIANO

It's been called "the best rock'n'roll piano ever." The Bechstein grand at Trident Studio was on The Beatles' *Hey Jude*, Queen's *Killer Queen* and Elton John's *Levon*, to name just three songs. And Rick Wakeman played it on *Changes*.

"It had a cut-through sound," Rick recalls, "beautifully balanced from top to bottom. From about 1970 through 1973 it was an absolutely perfect instrument. It went to auction when Trident closed. It had a guide price of £100,000 and it didn't sell. Nobody truly knows what happened to it after that, because nobody had the serial number."

CHOSEN BY
RAMI JAFFEE

There are a lot of David Bowies, but my David Bowie is *Hunky Dory* and *Spiders From Mars*. I was introduced in the late seventies, early eighties, by listening to the song *Changes* and *Ziggy Stardust*. It was commercial, but there was something spooky and funky and glammy and even proggy. All the bands I was in in the eighties were very much copying Bowie from that period – our guitar player would always try to copy the Mick Ronson tone.

In 2000 I played with The Who at Madison Square Garden. I was walking in the hallway, and I see these three guys right in front of our dressing room, and I see these little miniature guys, very small. And I look closer and it's Roger Daltrey, Lenny Kravitz and David Bowie. I knew Lenny from way back when, so I walked over to them, and David Bowie goes: "Oh, Rami." And I was, like: "What, he knows me? He studied the name of the fucking keyboard player? Fuck!" The man was a legend.

studio it can become stale, and I think David wanted to capture the energy of it being on the edge."

"There was incredible pressure in getting a track recorded right," Woodmansey agreed. "David didn't like doing more than three takes to get it. Nearly every track I recorded with David was first, second or third take, usually second. He knew when a take was right."

Changes was released as a single in January 1972, but failed to chart in the UK, and in the US it made it only to No.66. But it became a staple of FM radio, and in Bowie's live sets, evolving through different arrangements as his stylistic calling card. As the lyric says, he was always *'much too fast to take the test'* of being pigeonholed.

The song, which has become an anthem of youthful freedom, has been covered by several artists, perhaps most creatively by Seu Jorge in Wes Anderson's film *The Life Aquatic*. It was also a preamble to John Hughes's teen movie *The Breakfast Club*.

Did Bowie know back in 1971 that he was making a career-defining single? Putting it in context of the album that it kicked off, he told me: "*Hunky Dory* gave me a fabulous groundswell. First with the sense of: 'Wow, you can do anything.' You can borrow the luggage of the past, you can amalgamate it with things that you've conceived could be in the future, and you can set it in the now. Then the record provided me, for the first time in my life, with an actual audience – I mean people actually coming up to me and saying: 'Good album, good songs.' That hadn't happened to me before. It was like: 'Ah, I'm getting it. I'm finding my feet. I'm starting to communicate what I want to do. Now… what is it I want to do?'"

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
December 1971

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK: did not chart, US: No.66

PESONNEL
David Bowie
Vocals, saxophone
Rick Wakeman
Piano
Mick Ronson
Guitar, string arrangement, backing vocals
Trevor Bolder
Bass
Mick Woodmansey
Drums

WRITTEN BY
David Bowie

PRODUCED BY
Ken Scott

ENGINEER
Ken Scott

LABEL
RCA

Q&A

Jaren Johnston

The Cadillac Three frontman on their new album, odd gifts from Billy Gibbons, religion, and writing 200 songs a year.

Words: **Polly Glass**

"Me and Chris [Shifflett] are pretty good friends," Jaren Johnston says of his band The Cadillac Three's connection to one of our guest editors. "And we met Dave [Grohl] and Taylor [Hawkins] a while ago. We're huge fans, and Dave was a huge influence on me, starting off as a drummer."

On one level Johnston is a true southern child – all trucker caps, Jack Daniel's and the most spectacularly country-fried accent in Tennessee. But there are other 'versions' of him. There's the boy who grew up on funk, rock, grunge, southern Baptist music and more. The guy who'll just as likely listen to Fugazi as Hank Williams Sr. The well-travelled millennial who spoke out in favour of the Black Lives Matter movement last summer, losing a few fans in the process.

Speaking from his home in Florida, where he's been enjoying some quality time with his wife and three-year-old son, Johnston has been adjusting to life as a homebody. Alongside parenting duties and producing other bands, he's used the time to make The Cadillac Three's second album of 2020, the irresistible, funked up *Tabasco & Sweet Tea*.

***Tabasco & Sweet Tea* is funky as hell. Do you think you'd have made it if it hadn't been for the pandemic?**

Yeah, I do. It just probably wouldn't have happened this quick. The original idea I started working on, I guess… When we were in Amsterdam I was singing the vocals for *Money Aint Shit*, just sitting in a hotel room singing the solo part. So some of the stuff was done in 2019. But then this whole [covid] thing hit, and I had nothing but time. Creatively I think it really helped me get through those first couple of months, not being able to play shows. Cos when you do something for twenty years, and then have it taken away from you without warning, it can do crazy things to your head.

The Cadillac Three have always had that funky, groovy side to their music, but this is the first time it's been at the forefront. Who are your funk heroes?

My dad played a lot of Tower Of Power, and when I was a kid playing drums I was really into funk and groove-oriented stuff. If *Tabasco & Sweet Tea* had horns all over it, it'd be a hillbilly Tower Of Power record. Then you throw in things that everybody knows, your James Browns, but then you have some country stuff that was funky as hell like Jerry Reed, and a lot of late-90s/early-2000s jazz-funk-fusion guys.

You were predominantly a drummer until your early twenties, weren't you?

Yeah, I was making a living doing it in Nashville, I was touring quite a bit. And then I had a couple of band experiences where I was writing a lot of songs and I was noticing that the lead guys in the band were… just not doing it right. I thought maybe I could take a shot at it.

Did the transition from drummer to frontman come naturally?

It was weird. I was nervous as hell. You just jump into it and throw a couple of beers down, and the next thing you know you're Bono [laughs] – or you think you are! It came kinda naturally. It was always fun.

The new album includes the songs *Devil's Lettuce, Crispy*… It's like 'country stoner funk' in places. How baked do you get in the name of your craft?

Honestly, those songs were more retrospective. They're more like telling tales about what it used to be like, y'know? Those songs are about pretty close to real-life stories where the characters' names have been changed. It's just stuff that we grew up doing. I don't smoke as much as we used to. I like it, I just don't do it as much as I used to.

On Chris Shiflett's podcast you told a story about ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons once giving you a cocaine vial filled with ground up chilli peppers and telling you to "sprinkle this on some chocolate ice cream. Things get *really* weird". I love that that's some wisdom he passed on to you.

Ha! Yeah, true story. He always had a gift. Every time I walked by his dressing room he'd say: "Jaren, come in here!" I think I got a couple of pocket knives from him, and seashells filled with drawings, and then that cocaine vial… Well it *looks* like a cocaine vial, and when you get it from Billy Gibbons it makes a better story if you say 'cocaine'! But it is a true story, and we did it when we got home. It was really good on the ice cream.

It does sound like something he'd say.

Oh yeah. We went to his place one time in Santa Fe, and there was not one piece of furniture in there except for the queen-size mattress in the corner with a sleeping bag on it, and a fax machine. That's all that was in there, and just cheques, money coming in! He's an interesting character. I'd love to get back together with him sooner rather than later.

The Cadillac Three's lyrics have always painted an evocative, affectionate picture of southern culture. Is it easy to separate the South you love from the problematic side – the political division, the controversy over the Black Lives Matter movement – that's been in the spotlight in 2020?

It is for me. I hate that it's not for other people. Me and my guys and the people that I surround myself with are very open-minded, very clear-

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY CHRIS SHIFLETT

The Cadillac Three are a great band from Nashville who play southern rock with country stylings. They're unique, a one-of-a-kind band, and you don't see a lot of that. I like bands that straddle different genres. Jaren, the singer, is a friend, and I've written a couple songs with him recently.

I loved Skynyrd growing up, and they were very influential to me guitar playing-wise, for sure. I got into some of the other stuff maybe a little bit later. I wasn't really hip to the Allmans and all that.

Jaren Johnston: you want songs, he's got 'em – *lots* of 'em.

"My first band was basically really bad Rage Against The Machine."

DYLAN RUCKER/PRESS

Jaren Johnston (centre) with The Cadillac Three.

minded as far as what's right and what's wrong. There are people in the South that are really… The people that are on that side aren't bad people, they're just looking at the situation differently.

You guys donated the proceeds from your merchandise store to the NAACP for a week in the aftermath of George Floyd's death.
I do get pretty irritated when some of our more narrow-minded fans jump on the socials and start talking about me and my family or friends. That shit doesn't fly, because it makes me go: "Okay, you don't have to listen to my band if my opinion about something's gonna piss you off enough that it ruins your ability to listen to my music." I'm not preaching anything that's weird. I'm just trying to say I believe in empathy and I want everybody to get along and… be smart about things.

The Cadillac Three aside, you've also written hits for some of country music's biggest stars (Keith Urban, Tim McGraw…). How many songs do you think you've written at this point? Ballpark figure?
Total? Let's see. I got my first publishing deal in 2005, and I probably turn in anywhere between 150 to 250 songs a year, so let's say 200 songs a year for 15 years… That's 3,000. That's an approximate, but there's a lot of songs.

Didn't you and Neil Mason [TC3's drummer] write a song that came out on one of Meat Loaf's records?
Yeah, the album was called *Hang Cool Teddy Bear*. It was an old American Bang song, I think [*If It Rains*]. But yeah, I met Meat Loaf in an elevator at Sony in Nashville, and we started talking and he goes: "So you're Jaren? Man, I literally just heard a song of yours in Troy's office" – in the president's office. And I go: "Oh, bitchin!" He goes: "Yeah, I think I'm going to record it." And I go: "That's not something I figured I was gonna hear today!" [laughs].

Is there anyone else that you'd still love to write for?
I always wanted to get in with Tom Petty to write. I'd love to write with Mike Campbell. I used to write a lot with Chris Stapleton, I'd like to do that again. We're pretty good friends. He's such an extraordinary singer, and his delivery and everything is amazing. I mean, the Dave Grohl thing. I know this is a Foo Fighters guest edit, but I've actually been writing songs with Chris Shiflett, and we've been talking about doing a project together and, y'know, I can't think of a better drummer for that project [smiles].

"I always wanted to get in with Tom Petty to write. I'd love to write with Mike Campbell."

Is it true that the first band you had in high school was called The Trolls Of Fortune?
Yes. It was basically really bad Rage Against The Machine. The first song was called *I Like My Socks*. We were thirteen, y'know. You don't have a whole bunch to write about at that point in your life. But that was fun. I actually played guitar in that band. There's some videos or VHS somewhere. I'm about three and a half feet tall.

When you were growing up your mum played the organ in church. Did you ever get involved in that kind of music?
I learned to sing a little bit in the choir. I may have played the drums in church a couple of times, but they didn't really have it [much] because it was a Southern Baptist church – piano on one side, organ on the other side, a choir with, like, eight people in it, two of them so old you think they're gonna pass away at any moment. But it was pretty much a right-down-the-middle church: "If you don't believe this you're going to hell!" That kinda vibe.

That kind of performance must seep into you, subconsciously if nothing else.
Oh yeah. I can remember my dad singing *Shine Jesus Shine* and mum played with him, and I remember it was on page 579 of the hymnal book. *Shine Jesus Shine* became my favourite song for like ten years because my dad sang it. But yeah, there's a lot of memories that I probably still look back on every now and again.

Where do you stand religiously these days?
I don't do a lot of church going, if that tells you anything. I guess I believe in something, I just don't… the world's so f-ed up at times these days it's hard to figure out what or why, y'know what I mean? So yeah, I'm in the middle ground, I'm in purgatory. Let's just say this: I'm waiting for a sign! [laughs].

You're a born and raised Nashville native. Is there anywhere else in the world you could see yourself living?
I bought a house in Florida. We lived down here probably half of 2020 and it's amazing. I looked at a house in Montana this morning. I love a lot of parts of Canada too, and I always loved Hawaii. We lived in Hawaii for about two months doing one of the American Bang records. I love Nashville as well, obviously.

Tabasco & Sweet Tea is out now via Big Machine.

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6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

X-Ray Spex

"Mad glasses", feminism, bondage trousers and a brilliant, troubled leader made these punk enigmas an alluring prospect.

Words: **Jo Kendall**

Described by unlikely fan and pop producer Mickie Most as "a punk ABBA", London band X-Ray Spex were led by the singular singer-songwriter Marianne Elliott-Said – aka Poly Styrene – who'd seen the Sex Pistols play Hastings Pier on her 18th birthday and was compelled to advertise in the music press for some "Young Punx Who Want To Stick It Together". A self-styled disposable, plastic popstar, Styrene soon became a role model with her Pop Art designs, visible chunky dental braces and her "effervescently discordant" vocal, her songs brimming with themes of feminism, anti-consumerism, and the search for her own identity.

X-Ray Spex was originally a clothing stall in Chelsea.
In 1976, around the corner from Acme Attractions and SEX, a stall appeared on King's Road with Poly Styrene at the helm, named after the "mad glasses" that Styrene's aunt sent to her from the US after her marriage to a GI. Styrene's home-made stock ranged from cheap rain macs hot-glued with diamante to bath-plug necklaces and plastic dresses, and her clients included Boy George and Paula Yates. After recruiting her band – Jak Airport (guitars), Paul Dean (bass), Paul Hurding (drums) and Lora Logic (bass) – Styrene gave each a playful makeover and gave the stall's name to the group.

Two women in the band was not going to work.
One reason Spex stood out was because of teenage saxophonist Lora Logic (aka Susan Whitby). Inspired by David Bowie and a "wild jazz man" tutor, Logic's sound and presence was marketable stuff in the eyes of Spex manager Falcon Stuart. However, when Jane Suck reviewed Spex in *Sounds* and went big on Logic's contribution, Styrene took umbrage. Logic was sacked before she could get her defining parts down on debut album *Germfree Adolescents.*

***Oh Bondage Up Yours!* was about more than a pair of trousers.**
Yes, the catalyst for Spex's defining anthem was a pair of Seditionaries bondage kecks hanging in the window of Vivienne Westwood's shop SEX. But Styrene was also talking about "slavery, the silencing of women and suffragettes," she told *Dazed And Confused*. "[Westwood's] clothes had such strong imagery… a million ideas flooded to mind."

Women were both inspired and intimidated by Styrene.
One night, playing at The Roxy, Spex followed The Slits. As Styrene sang into the mic, nothing was heard. Slits vocalist Ari Up had pulled the plug; a petulant young rival safe in her sisterhood. But Poly was inspiring the next wave, including 15-year-old Neneh Cherry, living in London with her stepfather, jazz trumpeter Don Cherry. "I found my voice and myself listening to Poly Styrene," singer-songwriter Neneh tweeted in 2017. "There was no other black person in punk, and not a woman."

Spex's style wouldn't always be full-on punk rock.
By 1979, Poly wanted to bring some more ambient, reflective, acoustic songs into Spex's set. This reflected her head-state; she had long battled with what was termed schizophrenia, but would be diagnosed as bipolar disorder in 1991. The band and label weren't keen, however, and when Spex played a new song to a Paris crowd, the mob grew angry, threw fireworks, and Spex had to escape sharpish. Later, Styrene embraced the Hare Krishna religion and reconciled with a coincidentally Krishna'd-up Logic. Spex reunited for 1995's *Conscious Consumer*, which still had political punch, but was softened by songs such as *Prayer For Peace*.

There's a Poly Styrene documentary film on the horizon.
Poly Styrene: I Am A Cliché, a collaboration between Styrene's daughter Celeste Bell, biographer Zoë Howe and director Paul Sng has taken a while to reach our screens after being crowdfunded in 2017. It's a punk'n'roll tale but has Styrene's relationship with Bell at its core. "Poly had to deal with issues of race and gender, her own mental health, and her spiritual journey too," Howe says. "It's Poly as a punk icon but also as a mother and a human being." This is planned for 2021.

Read more about Poly in Day-Glo: The Poly Styrene Story, out now via Omnibus Press.

GETTY

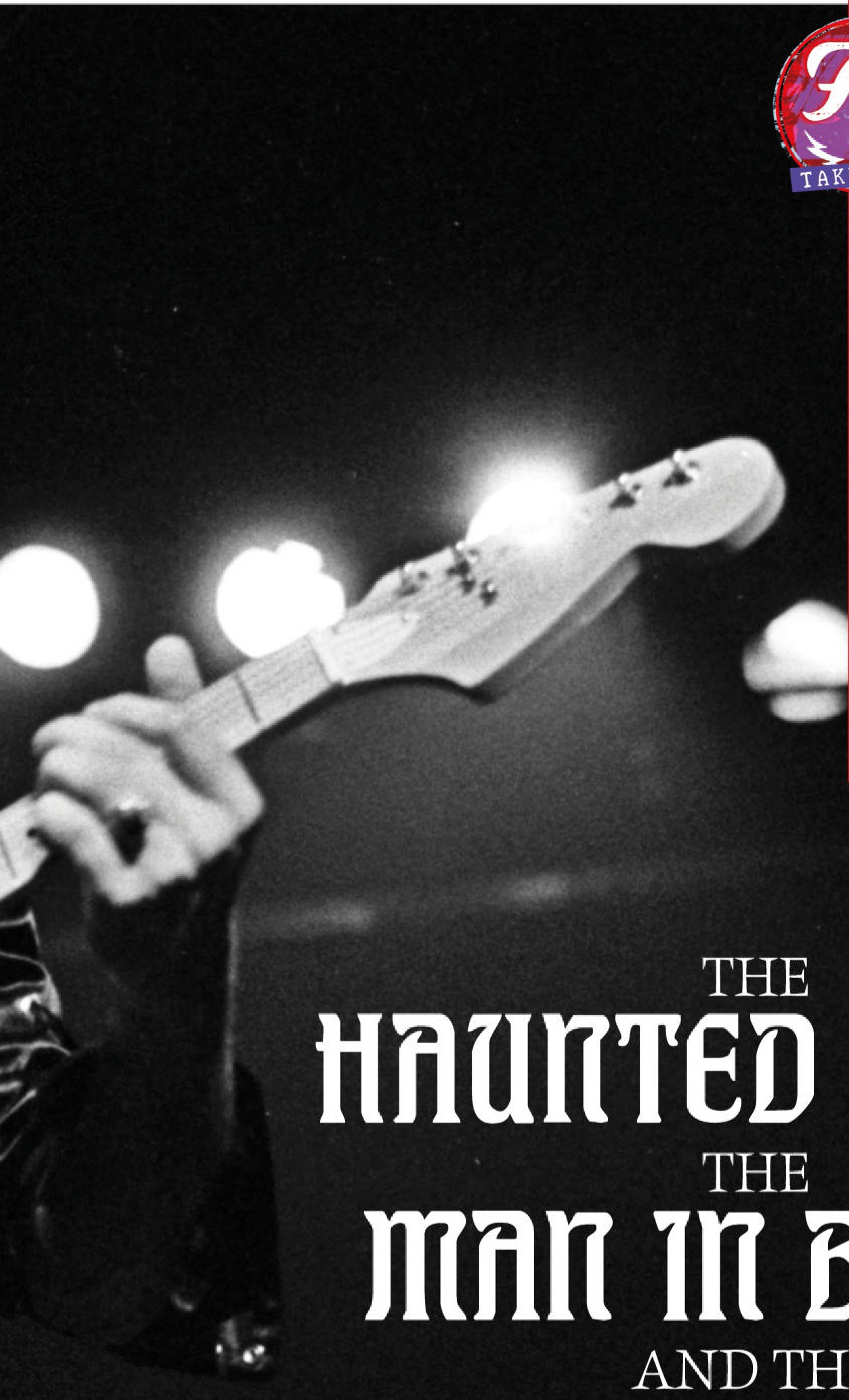
TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY

PAT SMEAR

Her voice, it goes right through your ears. X-Ray Spex were their own thing – they weren't like anything else around. They were interesting and different and still had the punk rock energy. You didn't have to fit a mould to be a punk rock band – you had to *not* fit a mould to be a punk rock band.

I always laughed at the album *Germfree Adolescents* – oh my god, that was so good – because the album was called *Germfree Adolescents*. I was in the Germs and then I was briefly in The Adolescents. When I quit The Adolescents, somebody gave me the album…



CHOSEN BY
CHRIS SHIFLETT

Ronnie James Dio-era Rainbow might be my favourite hard rock band ever. I loved them growing up, but there were other bands I loved a lot more, like Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. But for whatever reason, I go back to Rainbow. When I'm jogging and I have my earbuds in, there's two things I go to: Pennywise, NOFX, Bad Religion, that kind of stuff… and the other is heavy metal from my youth. I go to Rainbow a ridiculous amount of times.

My go-to Rainbow album is *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll*, baby. Come on! It's got *Kill The King* on it, and I couldn't live without that.

Ritchie Blackmore is an influence. We grew up listening to Deep Purple and Rainbow. He had such a massive impact on everything else that came afterwards too.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE, THE MAN IN BLACK AND THE CLASSIC ALBUM

For the members of **Rainbow**, memories of recording their third album might be filled with sackings, seances, spooks and being scared shitless, but they also made a truly great record: *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll.*

Words: **Mick Wall**

RICH GALBRAITH/ICONICPIX

Rainbow in LA, June 1977. Clockwise from top left: Ronnie James Dio, Bob Daisley, David Stone, Cozy Powell, Ritchie Blackmore.

It's Britain, May 1978. Rock is dead. Metal is for morons. Punk has taken over. And anyone who says different needs to be humiliated and punished. First in the pages of the *NME*, then anywhere you go, for the rest of your life.

However, if you take a look at the UK album chart dated May 7, 1978, at No.1 you will find not The Jam or The Stranglers or The Clash, but the soundtrack to *Saturday Night Fever*. Hot on its heels at No.2: *20 Golden Greats* by Nat King Cole. Elsewhere in the Top 10 are the soundtrack albums to *The Stud* and *Pennies From Heaven*, alongside the latest scrumptious offerings from Wings, ABBA and Johnny Mathis. The only identifiably 'rock' albums – neither of which are especially 'rock' – are *And Then There Were Three* by newly-a-trio Genesis and *City To City* by dreary Gerry Rafferty. The rest of the Top 30 tells the same story: a sprinkling of new wave – old hippies dressed as punks, such as Elvis Costello and Blondie – and a lot of Billy Joel, ELO, Fleetwood Mac and Rita Coolidge. Safe City.

There is, however, one chink of light in the bleak, drowsy fug of that UK chart in May 1978. Straight in this week at No.7, pop pickers, it's Rainbow and *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll*. The third album by the band formed by former Deep Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and previously unknown American singer Ronnie James Dio, *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll* is proof that, far from dead, rock with a capital 'R' is alive and well, and in exile no more.

"I don't think any of us paid any attention whatsoever to punk," Ronnie Dio would tell me years later. "I still saw what we did as being more unique, what Ritchie and I called 'medieval blues'."

"[Ronnie] was a strong alpha male, and so am I. He wanted to go one way, I wanted to go the other."

Ritchie Blackmore

But where the unpredictable Blackmore had originally seen his collaboration with Dio as an upgrade on the rock-meets-classical format of heyday Purple, three years on he was now more interested in the colossal success of Foreigner – the US-based rock band built around the abundant talents of another English guitarist, Mick Jones.

Blackmore was by a mile the better player. Jones was by a mile the better hit maker. The result: two Rainbow albums weighted with accolades and plentiful sales in every country in the world – except America. In the same period were two multi-platinum Foreigner albums that no one outside America rated at all, but with combined sales of more than 10 million in the US, along with four giant hit singles.

"I think Ritchie was getting a lot of people at the record label whispering in his ear too," said Dio. "Pushing for the band to go commercial. Hence the actual song *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll*. I didn't consciously write the lyrics that way, but it was definitely seen as having 'hit potential', as they called it."

Ritchie certainly hoped so. He liked having Ronnie around.

The story of the *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll* album, like the story of so many fork-in-the-road records, begins with the story of the band's previous album, their second, *Rising*, released exactly two years before. The only studio album by what is now viewed as the classic line-up of Rainbow: Blackmore and Dio augmented by Jimmy Bain (bass), Cozy Powell (drums) and Tony Carey (keyboards). Five years after its release it was voted the greatest heavy metal album of all time in

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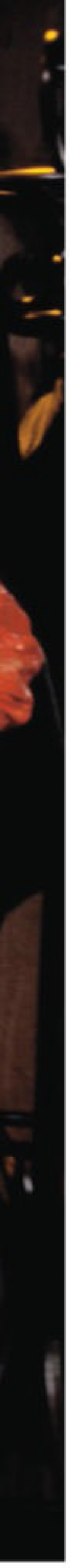

Not yet over the Rainbow: Ronnie Dio in June 1977.

a new magazine called *Kerrang!* We're talking properly fucking heavy.

Expectation among fans was that the next Rainbow album would be at least as good, probably even better. Such was the momentum in the wake of *Rising* – made even greater by the release in the summer of '77 of the live double *On Stage*, recorded in Japan on the final leg of the *Rising* world tour.

Rather than the expectation piling on the pressure, Blackmore would later explain to me, "it had the opposite effect. I'm at my most free when expectations are high."

Free enough to fire both Jimmy Bain and Tony Carey from the band on the eve of making the next album. Moves made unilaterally by the guitarist that would have repercussions on the future not just of Rainbow but also on the history of rock and metal.

"Ritchie made those decisions, but you could see them coming," Cozy Powell would later tell me. "Tony Carey had already been fired a couple of times – he used to get on Ritchie's nerves. Jimmy was a party animal – and a big pal of Ronnie's."

Indeed Bain's dismissal hit Ronnie particularly hard. Although the two men were outwardly very different

"I loved being in Rainbow... But by the time I made my decision to leave, I felt I had no choice."

Ronnie Dio

– Jimmy the up-all-night-every-night type, Ronnie the retreat-to-your-room-and-read type – the two had bonded over a shared love of British humour and Indian food.

"I loved Jimmy like a brother," Ronnie told me. "When he got fired from Rainbow I thought it was very cold. It was a week before Christmas. I thought that was unnecessary – even for someone as calculating as Ritchie."

It made for a tense, unnecessarily drawn-out start to the making of *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll*. There had been a US tour scheduled for the start of 1977 that now had to be postponed while they looked for replacements – something that proved much trickier than Blackmore had envisaged.

Auditioning new players in LA, it looked like former Vanilla Fudge keyboard player Mark Stein was in. In a strange twist of fate, Stein had most recently been in the band Blackmore's replacement in Purple, guitarist Tommy Bolin, had put together for his solo career. When Bolin died of a drugs OD in December '76, Stein was looking for a gig. He was certainly good enough. But Ritchie had a last-minute change of heart and Stein was out again.

Next in the frame was ex-Procol Harum man Matthew Fisher, who had played on the original demo of first Rainbow album's *Black Sheep Of The Family*. But again Ritchie, inexplicably, changed his mind about him. Next up was Eddie Jobson, a staple of Roxy Music and various Bryan Ferry solo line-ups, who seemed perfect on paper. But not to Ritchie.

Then along came David Stone, keyboard player with unknown Canadian prog outfit Symphonic Slam, classically trained, master of the weird soundscape. After a baptism of fire getting to know Ritchie and Cozy, Stone was offered the gig. By then, however, the search had gone on so long that Tony Carey had actually been brought back, albeit temporarily, and was on board for the first three tracks recorded for the new album, including the title track, *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll*.

Finding a bass player proved equally difficult. Ronnie had hoped his former Elf band mate Craig Gruber would land the gig. Gruber had played bass on *Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow*, then been fired along with the rest of Elf when Blackmore came to put the live line-up of Rainbow together. Out of respect to Ronnie, Blackmore allowed Gruber to rehearse with the band for a few weeks – after which it was made clear that he wasn't seriously being considered for the gig.

Enter former Jon Hiseman's Colosseum bassist Mark Clarke. He was another player who looked like a good fit on paper, but Blackmore soon decided he disliked Clarke's jazz-style finger technique – a complete 180 away from Bain's more rudimentary rocktastic pick-thudding – and sacked him.

With recording of the album already under way, Blackmore simply decided he would play bass on the album. That is until he finally agreed on a permanent replacement for Bain, and brought in the Australian former member of Widowmaker, Bob Daisley, who arrived in time to play on three tracks on the album.

Even the studio the band worked in was unusual. As Blackmore explained at the time: "I usually like to record in Germany." His then wife Babs was German, they had a home there, and Blackmore had a preference for Musicland studios in Munich, where he had first worked with Deep Purple and where the first two Rainbow albums had been made. ▷

CHÂTEAU D'HÉROUVILLE: ALAMY; DIO: GETTY

Once close, but soon so far away: Ronnie and Ritchie.

However, with ELO already ensconced there making what would be their double album *Out Of The Blue*, the decision was taken to head to France, to the 18th-century Château d'Hérouville, near the Paris suburb of Pontoise – quickly dubbed 'Pantyhose' by the band.

Nicknamed the Honky Château after Elton John recorded his 1971 album of the same name there, it had since become the go-to residential studio for boho-minded rock aristo-cats such as Pink Floyd, David Bowie and Bad Company, to name a few. It also came with a reputation for being haunted. Bowie had refused to sleep in the master bedroom, claiming there was "a darkness and coldness" to the place. When Blackmore heard this he absolutely insisted on sleeping there. But then Ritchie's fascination with the supernatural was already well established, and the Château Horrorsville, as Dio nicknamed it, became the location for some of Blackmore's infamous séances.

As Ronnie recalled: "Ritchie liked to get out his ouija board and get us all to sit with him while he tried to contact whatever spirits happened to be hanging around."

The séances would be conducted most nights. Ronnie was pretty sure Ritchie must have been moving the glass with his finger, but that could not explain some of the strange things that resulted. Like the night Thor the God of Thunder appeared at the table – and a huge thunderstorm suddenly erupted outside. Or the several occasions when a night at the ouija board was followed by the discovery that all the tapes of the day's recording had been mysteriously wiped clean. Or the times the 24-track tape machine would actually turn itself on and off.

The most terrifying occasion, though, was the night Baal, the pagan god of fertility and war, paid them a visit, spelling out the following message on the board: "I am Baal. I create chaos. You will never leave here, so don't even try." This upset everyone so much that they insisted Ritchie put the board away for the night.

But later, after Ritchie had left the room, the others couldn't resist laying out the board and alphabetical numbers again. Once again, Baal

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Cozy Powell circa '79.

Ritchie Blackmore with Rainbow at Budokan, Tokyo, January '78.

appeared. This time the message spelled out: "Where is Blackmore?" – just as the door opened and in walked Ritchie.

With Ritchie joining them at the board, this time the glass took on a life of its own, whirling round the table before taking off and smashing against the wall. Meeting over!

There were other strange incidents – Ritchie claimed he was looking in the mirror when the distorted reflection of Mozart, no less, appeared to be staring back at him. Cozy claimed he'd been locked in his room one night and all the books came flying off the shelf. The ouija board was retired after that. The only sign of the turmoil it caused was in the dedication that would appear on the album sleeve: "No thanks to Baal".

The music itself was top-notch, and for many Rainbow fans of the era it was as good, maybe even better than that on *Rising*. There was certainly an impressive degree of overlap in terms of quality. But then the title track actually dated back to the *Rising* sessions of two years before. As did another cornerstone moment, the epic *Kill The King*.

The catchy, anthemic *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll* became the first single from the album and, equally predictably perhaps, gave Rainbow their first Top 30 hit single. Already familiar to Rainbow's live audience, *Kill The King* opened side two of the album in a similar take-no-prisoners style. Given its title, many assumed it to be another of Dio's fantastical tales from the misty past.

In fact, as Ronnie later revealed: "It's actually about a chess match." A superb chess player himself, Ronnie saw the game as "a metaphor for life and death". Indeed the use as metaphors of kings and queens, pawns and knights, would become a recurring theme in Dio's writing.

More prosaic were songs including *LA Connection*, inspired by the departure of Tony Carey, who was always calling home to LA, homesick. Another thing Ritchie found irritating. Or as Ronnie put it for him: *'Oh, carry home my broken bones and lay me down to rest/Forty days of cries and moans I guess I've failed to pass the test.'*

"Ritchie liked to get out his ouija board and get us all to sit with him while he tried to contact whatever spirits happened to be hanging around."

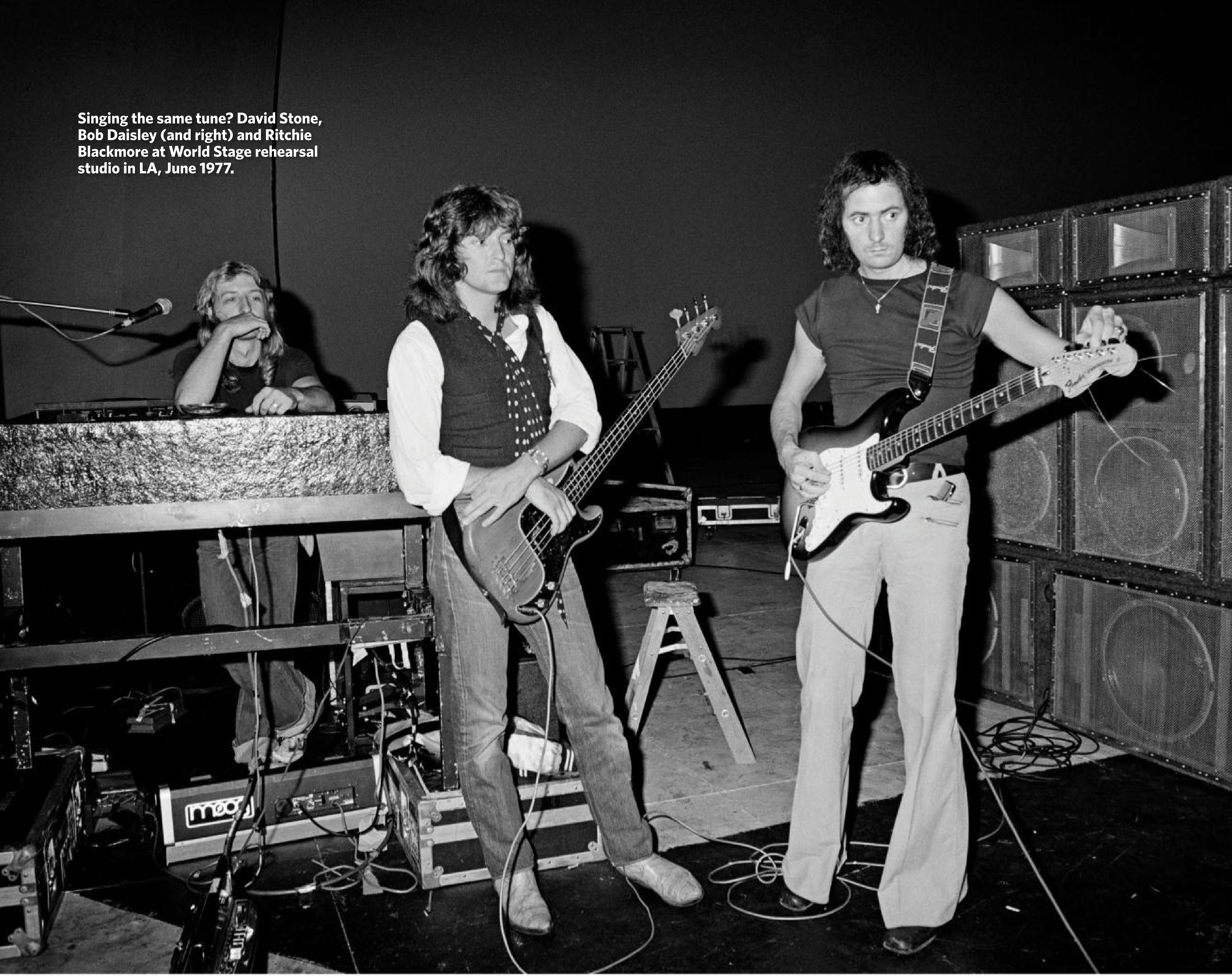
Ronnie Dio

Other bread-and-butter tracks, like *Sensitive To Light* and *The Shed*, were similarly shorn of Dio's signature lyrical mysticism, harking back to his days with Elf, when Ronnie still sang about the same come-on-baby things as all the other singers.

The steaks on the plate though – *Gates Of Babylon* and *Rainbow Eyes* – were the real deal. The former was the last track recorded for the album, after the band had returned to the Château to finish up in December. By then the new Blackmore-Dio-Powell-Stone-Daisley line-up had toured extensively and were, as Cozy put it, "tighter than a duck's arse under water". Although David Stone wasn't credited on the album, it's his ominous keyboards that set the melodramatic tone, before Blackmore's grandiose riff begins pounding like a metal hammer, and Dio weaves a tale of magic carpet rides, genies, cities of *'heavenly sin'* where you will *'sleep with the devil'* before he takes you away to the very *'gates of Babylon'*. In Sweden, a kohl-eyed young guitarist named Yngwie Malmsteen was so taken by the track that he built a career for himself around its phantasmagorical imagery, and later even covered it on one of his own albums.

It's the final – and longest – track on the album that is, in retrospect, its most intriguing: the beautiful *Rainbow Eyes*. A ballad, a paean, a promise, this was Ronnie Dio singing directly to the love of his life, Wendy. With Blackmore delivering a kind of extended musical meditation on Jimi Hendrix's *Little Wing*, Dio opens his heart and lets his love light shine. The title, *Rainbow Eyes*, he later told me, came from the fact that Wendy's eyes often

BAAL: ALAMY; BLACKMORE: GETTY



Singing the same tune? David Stone, Bob Daisley (and right) and Ritchie Blackmore at World Stage rehearsal studio in LA, June 1977.

appeared to change colour depending on her mood. "Sometimes they are green, sometimes blue, sometimes they are hazel."

Augmented by violins, cello, viola and flute, if any track demonstrated the versatility of Rainbow, this was it. The fact that the lyrics were also based on Dio's real-life relationship – one that would endure until his dying day – only made the statement more powerful.

As if to underline the sincerity of the music, Ronnie and Wendy married on the same day that *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll* was released. The wedding was held at Waveny Castle in New Canaan, Connecticut, where the couple now lived. Ritchie was best man. The rest of the band and their managers and various road crew were also in attendance, as were several of Wendy's friends from London, where she was born, and LA, where Ronnie had first met her three years before.

The couple had only just returned from their honeymoon when Rainbow set out on what it was hoped would be their breakthrough US tour: 60 shows that stretched throughout the summer. With both management and record company talking up the new album as the one that would finally "put them over", when *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll* became the band's least successful album so far in America, peaking, if that's the word, at No.89 in the *Billboard* Hot 100, Blackmore's moods grew blacker than his shirts.

The plan had been for the band to take Special Guest spots, playing second fiddle that summer on arena shows by Foghat, REO Speedwagon and Alice Cooper, before moving up to headline their own arena dates. But with the album stuttering to a halt before the tour had even begun, and the single making barely a dent on the all-important AM radio formats, Rainbow were forced to redraw the tour map and schedule their headline tour around theatres and concert halls.

"I don't think any of us paid any attention whatsoever to punk. I still saw what we did as being more unique."

Ronnie Dio

Bad feeling bedevilled the shows. Barely 45 minutes into a show at the Stanley Theater in Pittsburgh (capacity 2,800) Ritchie walked off and refused to come back on. The pissed-off audience almost rioted. At another show, when someone threw a large firework at the stage as the band were returning for an encore, Blackmore again simply turned on his heels and refused to come back. Cue more pandemonium. On other nights Blackmore would do the whole show with his back to the audience. At yet another show, he actually climbed out of a dressing room window and left.

At the 17,000-capacity Omni Arena in Atlanta, during Rainbow's support run with REO Speedwagon, somebody threw a bottle that hit Dio smack in the face, nearly knocking him out. While he was carried backstage, where one of the emergency medics put stitches in a bad head wound, the band kept playing until he was able to stagger back on, blood still running down his face.

"They said I should have gone straight to the hospital," he later recalled, "but I hated the idea of letting down the fans."

After the show, a pissed-off Ritchie got into a row with REO's tour manager, followed by Rainbow and their crew smashing up the dressing room.

The tour came to a fittingly anticlimactic halt during Rainbow's headline show at the 3,000-capacity Palladium in New York. What should have been a triumphant ending, at least, to a troubled few months of touring instead turned into another disaster. The band were just three

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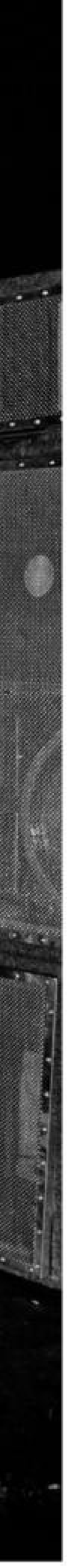
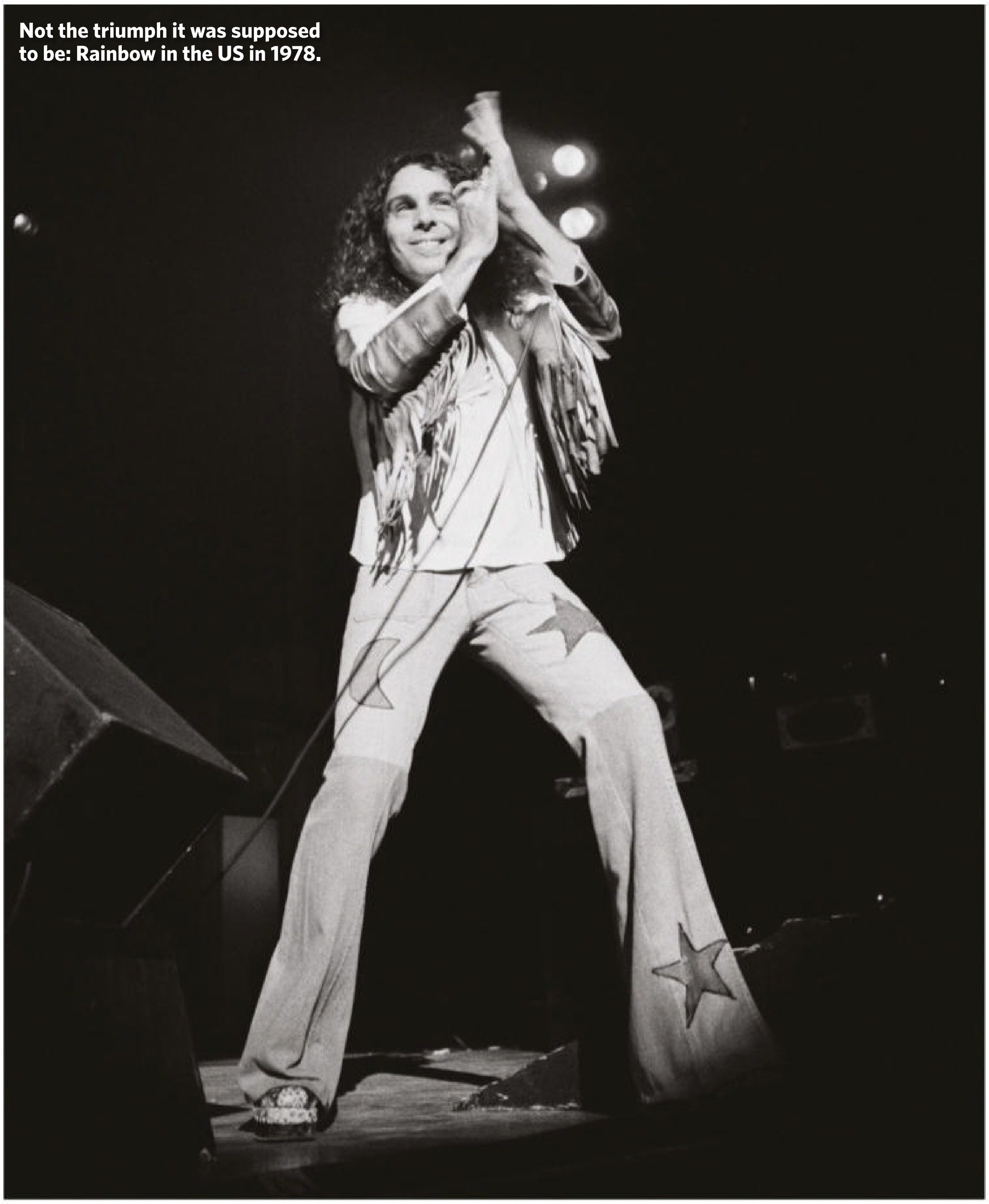




Not the triumph it was supposed to be: Rainbow in the US in 1978.

numbers into their set when the PA crackled and fizzed to a halt. They were forced to leave the stage while the crew sweated blood trying to fix the problem. But when, after an hour and half, the PA stubbornly refused to sputter back to life, Ronnie was obliged to go out and apologise to the audience. "We'll make it up to you next time, New York!" he reassured everybody.

But there would be no next time – not for this line-up of Rainbow.

"For years afterwards, people would tell me how surprised they were when I left Rainbow," Dio later recalled. "I would smile and say I was kind of surprised myself. But that was just to disguise the frustration I felt. I loved being in Rainbow, I felt Ritchie and I had something special going, as songwriters and performers. But by the time I made my decision to leave, I felt I had no choice."

Blackmore had already fired Bob Daisley and David Stone in the weeks that followed the tour. Convinced more than ever that Rainbow needed a drastic change in direction if they were ever to crack the American market the way bands like Boston and Foreigner had – art for art's sake, hit singles for fuck's sake, as the old music biz maxim in the 70s went – he was also now prepared to sacrifice the only other member of Rainbow who had previously seemed indispensible: his singer, co-songwriter and soon to be former friend, Ronnie James Dio.

The first inkling Dio had of these sudden changes came from an unlikely source: former Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover, who was hired by Ritchie to be the producer of the next Rainbow album. With Blackmore and Dio no longer on speaking terms, after Ronnie steadfastly refused to comply to Ritchie's demand for him to "stop writing in such a fantasy-oriented way and write some love songs", it was left to Glover to try to sell the singer on doing a cover of Carole King's *Will You Love Me Tomorrow*, a big UK hit for The Shirelles in 1961, which Blackmore thought might make for a hit single for Rainbow.

Ironically, Dio had already released his own version of the song back in his Ronnie And The Prophets days. It had been a tremendous flop then, and he saw no reason why it wouldn't be for Rainbow as well.

Singer and guitarist ended up having a huge row about it. Shortly afterwards a press release was issued announcing Dio's 'departure' from Rainbow. "Ritchie always inferred he fired me. But as far as I recall, I left," Dio told me.

What appeared to be a bad turn in the road actually became the making of Ronnie James Dio, who replaced Ozzy Osbourne in Black Sabbath just a few months later, and after leaving that band enjoyed a hugely successful career in his own multi-platinum-selling band Dio in the 80s.

"I think Ritchie was getting a lot of people at the record label whispering in his ear, pushing for the band to go commercial."

Ronnie Dio

Blackmore eventually got his wish for Rainbow to become more commercial, when he brought in singer Graham Bonnet and finally scored the first of a handful of fully legit hit singles with the Russ Ballard song *Since You Been Gone* – although not in the US, where no Rainbow single would ever make it into the Top 30.

And while Rainbow never did turn *Will You Love Me Tomorrow* into a single, they did perform it live, in 1980 when they headlined the first Monsters Of Rock festival.

Interviewed by *Newsweek* in 2017, Blackmore was asked if he had been disappointed that he wasn't able to invite Dio, who died in 2010, to take part in Rainbow's 2016 reunion shows.

He replied: "I hate to say it, but no, I wasn't. I'd finished with Ronnie a long time ago, and we kept in touch now and again but I went on to other things and he was in other things. We kept it very convivial and that, but I think neither one of us really wanted to get back together. He was a strong alpha male, and so am I. He wanted to go one way, I wanted to go the other."

You could also say they were heading in the same direction: both of them in pursuit of that pot of gold that lies somewhere over the rainbow.

FOUR TO THE FLOOR

They're smart, they don't like to repeat themselves and they describe history as "rose-coloured". Meet **Parquet Courts**, Brooklyn's maverick heirs to the Velvet Underground throne.

Words: **Max Bell**

EBRU YILDIZ/PRESS

Court in the act: flooring it in Germany in 2018.

Late November 2020. New York City is in lockdown. The President from Queens has gone rogue following an election that gripped the world, and Brooklyn-based band Parquet Courts are on tenterhooks. Thanksgiving? Not so much. Singer and guitarist Andrew Savage assesses the mood. "America is palpably fragile," he says. "It's like we're down with the sinister overlords. I've been out cycling in the city and Long Island. It feels strange."

Boundary-melting rockers Parquet Courts formed in 2010, and prior to the paralysing events of 2020 had been on the road for much of the time since. At this point, frustration and cabin fever are infecting them. "I've never wanted to play live music so badly as I do right now," says Savage. "I've got lots of new material, and I'd love to be playing it for actual people."

Just before covid-19 hit, the Courts had recorded new studio material. Savage is reticent about what, or who produced it; Danger Mouse had added magic dust to their most recent album, 2018's *Wide Awake!*, but the band seldom repeat a scenario. "We're not working with those people again," Savage says, "but I have a good relationship with Brian 'DM' Burton [aka Danger Mouse]."

Parquet Courts' 10-year journey began with alt. and hardcore roots in Denton, Texas, where Savage and the band's other main guitarist/writer Austin Brown met at university. There they soaked up the work of hip-hop acts like Underground Kingz and DJ Screw.

Epic albums of their own ensued, among them their 2011 debut *American Specialities*, the tumultuously punky *Sunbathing Animal*, southern gothic *Content Nausea*, off-the-cuff *Monastic Living* and the Talking Heads-on-steroids blitz *Human Performance*. David Byrne's line *'We dress like students, we dress like housewives'* (from Talking Heads' *Life During Wartime*, on their 1979 album *Fear Of Music*) feels pertinent to the Courts' aesthetic.

> **"Rock occupies a different cultural place now, it's not the epicentre anymore."**
>
> **Andrew Savage**

Much of this trajectory is captured in the band's new 10-year anniversary concert film. Directed by Andy Capper, *On Time* is lashed to a live show at Brooklyn's Pioneer Works, marking a decade since Parquet Courts' first show at former Brooklyn DIY spot Monster Island Basement by the East River.

The band previously worked with Capper on 2013's acclaimed *Light Up Gold Road Trip* documentary, in which they performed at NRMAL festival in Monterrey, Mexico, and took lots of LSD and peyote washed down with plenty of Tequila. "I never watched that," Savage claims. "I don't like seeing myself perform. Anyway, we were tripping, so it's a hazy memory."

Parquet Courts' history takes us through contrasting US states and styles. Savage, his brother Max the drummer, and Brown provide the Lone Star roots (including the aforementioned hip-hop influences) that Bostonian bass player Sean Yeaton hammers into melodic submission – with his grounding in nu metal gods Korn and Philadelphia slowcore act Nothing. Tastes of The Fall, Neil Young, Crass, Black Flag and the Velvet Underground are also in the blend, but Courts remain a hard group to pinpoint. For the converted, that's part of their appeal.

For his part, Savage doesn't major in nostalgia or pigeonholes. "I get annoyed when people tell me who we sound like," he says. "Even if the bands are good. I can't deny Lou Reed, because he's the blueprint. He wrote the type of music I play. I love The Beatles, I really do, but the Velvets played in dive bars. They wrote what it meant to be a hard-working band. They created their own imperfections. Lou and John Cale weren't always perfect musicians, and yet they were. History is rose-coloured. That Andy Warhol Factory scene looks like a lot of fun, but there's so much going on in New York City now it will seem like the last days of Rome. Our casual opulence isn't sustainable, but I kind of want to see what happens. I'm in no rush to leave. Yes, the sixties and seventies are interesting, but I would rather live my moment."

Courts love a powerfully angry manifesto. The glorious blood-rushing, bovver-booted-and-bracer'd *Total Football* name-checks Cy Twombly before concluding with the lyric: *'…and fuck Tom Brady!'*, in reference to the high-profile American football quarterback ("[it's] the idea of the alpha male, quarterback idea of traditional American masculinity that we're rejecting in that song," Savage told *NME* in 2018). The fantastically snide *Master Of My Craft* (*'People die I don't care, you should see the wall of ambivalence I'm building'*) gives hippies a kicking and points out that *'Socrates died in the fuckin' gutter.'* Ponder the Kafkaesque futility of the song *Dust*, or the Cold War noir of *Berlin Got Blurry*: this ain't yer standard ranch stash.

Savage doesn't like to sit idle. He juggles Parquet Courts commitments with a solo career (his 2017 record *Thawing Dawn* is an addictive set of neurotic love songs) and a full-on calling as an artist and graphic designer, who provides the band's cover work. He was even nominated for a Grammy, in the Best Recording Package category, for *Human Performance* in 2017, losing out to Jonathan Barnbrook for David Bowie's *Blackstar* imagery. "It was obvious that it would win, but I didn't care," Savage says. "I got to wear a tux and eat a nice dinner."

It's a bit of a change from the time he supplemented his income by dealing weed in Manhattan, delivering green to wealthy execs on his pushbike, as documented in the paranoid psych drone *Stoned And Starving*.

"I don't like to talk about that too much, but it's a career I may take up again," he says drily. "People forget musicians are real people. I live modestly. I have two roommates, and a cat called Frida. I ride my bike, I take the train. I'm not on bread and water, but it's never been clearer: this is about survival. I'm lucky. I sell my work and do commercial commissions."

Indeed, as we learn from his UK label rep, in the hallway of the Beggars Music Group in Wandsworth, Savage painted a mural titled *Portobello Road, West London* depicting The Prodigy's Keith Flint, among others.

The thing about Parquet Courts is that they make music for the way we live now. In their hands, rock'n'roll's self-referential tropes have been overhauled. "Rock occupies a different cultural place now," Savage says. "It's not the epicentre any more. Looked at in the cold light of day, it's just wildly dysfunctional people. The romance of rock remains."

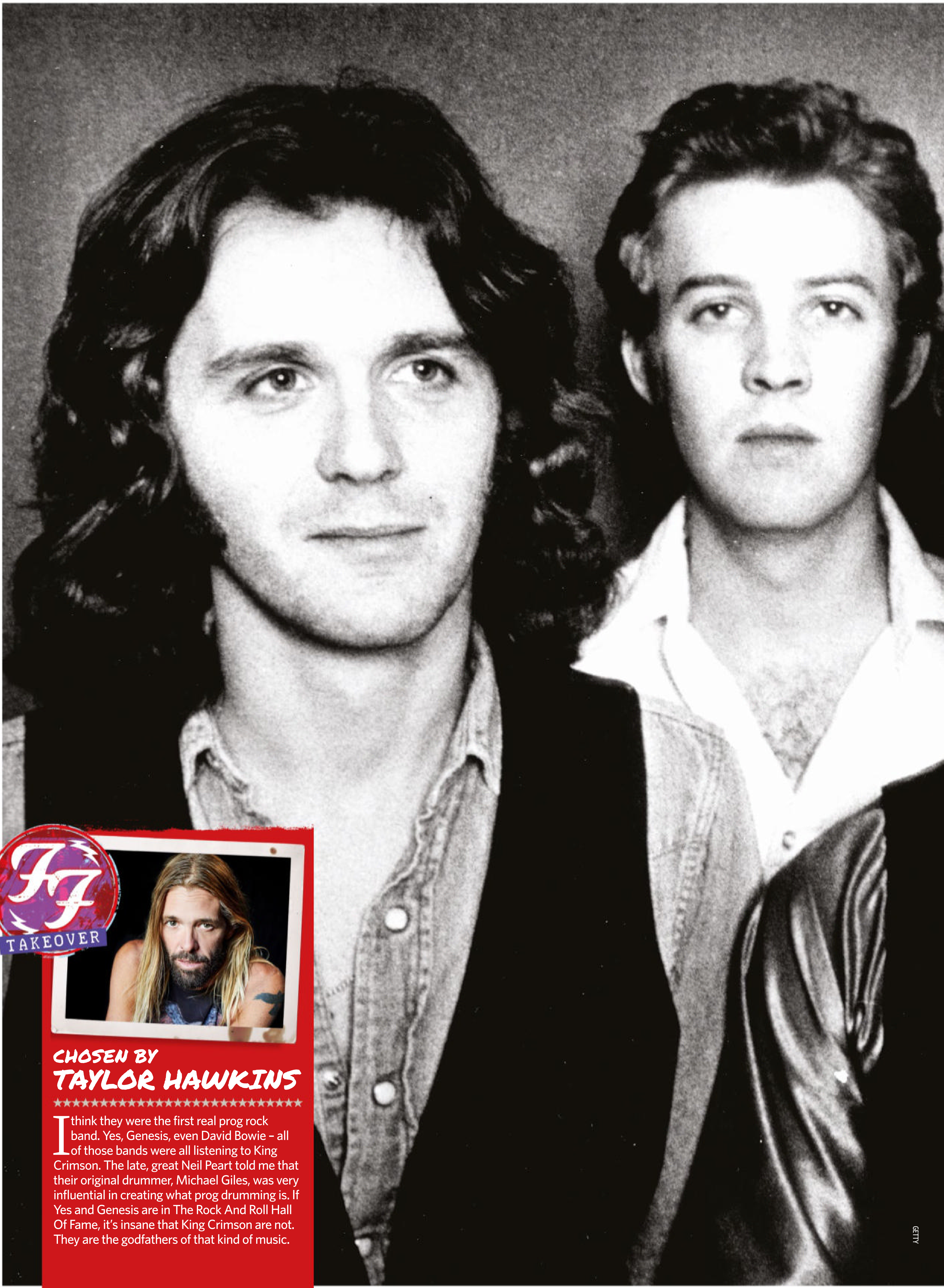
They really are right on time.

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY NATE MENDEL

Parquet Courts do this dirty, updated new wave kind of thing – these simple, catchy songs that are ultimately influenced by the Velvet Underground. I like bands that sound like the bands I was into when I was young, where they initially sound amateurish and sloppy, but the more you listen to it the more you realise everything is exactly where it's supposed to be. And that's what Parquet Courts do.

NATE: DANNY CLINCH; TOP GETTY



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TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY
TAYLOR HAWKINS

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

I think they were the first real prog rock band. Yes, Genesis, even David Bowie – all of those bands were all listening to King Crimson. The late, great Neil Peart told me that their original drummer, Michael Giles, was very influential in creating what prog drumming is. If Yes and Genesis are in The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, it's insane that King Crimson are not. They are the godfathers of that kind of music.

The Great Deceiver

Their reputation is that of studied musos, but **King Crimson** enjoyed their share of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll debauchery while honing their formidable live show on the road back in the 70s. That musical muscle was distilled into 1974's *Starless And Bible Black*, one of the finest live records of all time – and one that most people thought was a studio album.

Words: **Sid Smith**

Bible **thumpers: (clockwise from below lef): Bill Bruford, David Cross, Robert Fripp, John Wetton.**

Palazzetto dello Sport, Rome, November 1973. King Crimson have just finished sound-checking for the evening's sell-out gig. As Robert Fripp, David Cross and Bill Bruford depart to ready themselves in the backstage area, John Wetton is fine-tuning his settings. "The sound-check over, I gave my bass to our roadie, and was just about to leave the stage when this fifteen-year-old girl came up to me. 'My name is Lorena,' she says. 'My brother's here because I need a chaperone. I'd like to marry you.' What the fuck?"

Back then, at home and abroad, there were legions of girls charging around from venue to venue, hurling declarations of undying love and more in the direction of their favourite pop idols. But the very prog King Crimson? Regarding the above scenario, Wetton admitted to being taken aback not so much by the demand as by the potential danger of the situation.

"I laughed a bit nervously, but she told me that she was serious and her brother would attest to that. 'I have a formal request from my family that you marry me.' I managed to placate the brother, who looked like he would've murdered me on the spot if I'd said no, and for a few moments I played along with it. It was extraordinary. There was no security, because the gig wasn't anywhere near starting. Then I went and got somebody from the management to tell the girl and her brother that we would consider her request. She was deadly serious.

"Amazing, really," he continued. "Italy in 1973 didn't have a progressive feminist atmosphere; guys were still lying on the pavement trying to look up miniskirts at that time. For this girl to get it together, get her brother down to the gig and – with her dad's permission – make a formal request that I marry her… I mean, it's extraordinary. Took me completely by surprise! Stuff like that would happen to Crimson all the time."

Despite their serious-muso image, King Crimson were no strangers to the occupational hazards of a band on tour experiencing road fever. Although they never quite got as far as throwing TV sets into swimming pools or trashing hotel rooms, they were certainly fond of indulging in some boisterous behaviour. "Like the time we were in Avignon," said Wetton, who recalled Crimson's visit to a rustic auberge on the outskirts of the beautiful old town in the south-east of France. "Crimson stayed in the same hotel that I'd stayed in as a member of Family when there'd been a food fight there. A food fight for Family was an every-night occurrence. But not for King Crimson."

After checking in, Wetton and company went down for dinner. "I just happened to mention about Family's food fight, and the whole thing broke out again with Crimson! Everyone in the band and crew flinging food at each other – ice cream, pâté, foie gras, you name it. The poor maître d' was standing there utterly bemused. He wasn't angry, he was just thinking: 'What the fuck is it with these guys? We had another English band do the same.' Thankfully he didn't twig that I was the common denominator."

While that kind of behaviour wasn't uncommon for touring rock bands, it's fair to say that King Crimson never had that reputation. "We get very bad press in that respect," Wetton explained. "We're not rock'n'roll; we're too studious, or something. That's not quite accurate. We just did it in a different way and we did it where there weren't any journalists, like in Avignon.

"Crimson were actually very rock'n'roll, in fact. There was plenty going on, I can assure you of that. We had our fair share of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, but not in the same way that Black Sabbath might have done, and we weren't tarred with the same brush. Because of the technicalities in our music, people probably expected Crimson to be more studious or more monkish. We were more monkfish than monkish, I would say."

There are other tales, of far more lurid backstage

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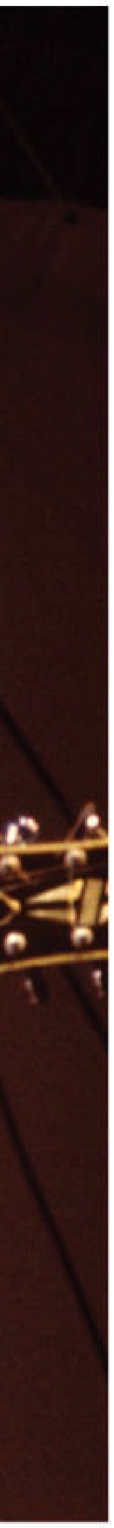


"King Crimson were nothing like the other bands of its generation. More accurately, the other bands were nothing like King Crimson."

Robert Fripp

antics, from Crimson's extensive list of live shows that are not repeatable. But any consideration of headlining bands of the era will inevitably uncover rock'n'roll's two close cousins sex and drugs lurking close by. Alongside such carnal cavorting, the consumption of cocaine would eventually become commonplace – although not, it should be noted, by everyone in the group.

'What plays on the road stays on the road' might well have been a golden rule for many groups of the day, but it seems nobody had passed that memo on to Robert Fripp. Just weeks before Wetton's marriage proposal in Rome, Crimson's leader/guitarist went on record in both *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express* to declare his availability to as many young ladies as might be interested. This was despite admitting the numbers he'd already had congress with as being, in his own words, somewhat excessive. "Sexuality pervades my work," he told bemused journalists at the time.

You might not think of Crimson's *Larks' Tongues In Aspic, Part Two* as the ideal music to accompany your seduction technique, but the makers of the soft-porn movie *Emmanuelle* evidently thought it couldn't hurt, and ripped off the track's thrusting themes to go with the on-screen action. The filmmakers ended up in court and lost their case. Even today, Fripp still receives a trickle of royalties from the film's soundtrack.

Of course, in 1973 King Crimson weren't touring only in order to pursue rutting opportunities. There was the not inconsiderable matter of recording a follow-up to that year's *Larks' Tongues*. The album had sold well, but the band were less than happy with it. Despite the classic nature of the material, and many inventive moments peppered throughout the record, Crimson felt that whatever magic had touched them as they played shows during the winter of '72, the recording of *Larks' Tongues* in the New Year had failed to capture any of the power or intensity that had moved not only the band themselves but also many commentators and fans.

Putting a brave face on their combined disappointment, by the time the album hit the shops the quartet were already touring the UK, ▷

BEAT IT – THE ULTIMATE PROG DRUMMERS

From legends to latter-day stars, these are the drummers you need to know.

NEIL PEART

Recently voted No.1 prog musician of all time by the readers of our sister title *Prog*, Rush's drummer was a poster boy for prog – a disciplined, metronomic and powerful player. Part of that ultimate power trio from 1975 until his untimely death in 2019, Peart continued pushing himself and boundaries, inspiring generations of drummers. His secret? "You have to practise… and trust yourself," he told MusicRadar in 2011.

MICHAEL GILES

King Crimson have come to be associated with some impressive drummers during their 50-plus years, but it all started with the quietly brilliant, arguably overlooked Michael Giles. Often cited by Neil Peart as an influence, Giles had previously played in the short-lived trio Giles Giles And Fripp, with his brother Peter and Robert Fripp, before joining Crimson. He co-wrote and played on the band's groundbreaking debut *In The Court Of The Crimson King* – on which his exhilarating polyrhythmic style is a feature – and *In The Wake Of Poseidon* before leaving.

NICK MASON

Pink Floyd's long-standing drummer, Mason was the dextrous engine room behind some of rock's most adored and spectacular moments. Plus, having reignited the flame of Syd Barrett-era Floyd with his group Saucerful Of Secrets, he's kept his chops in top shape. "I never wanted to go and play in a different band," Mason told *Prog* magazine. "It never appealed. It was always Pink Floyd for me. I don't see myself as keeper of the flame, but I'm enjoying the fact that people like [his Saucerful Of Secrets]. Somebody said to me: 'You of all of us knew Syd the least, but you're probably doing more to bring him to people's attention.'"

MIKE PORTNOY

Seemingly an inexhaustible human octopus, Mike Portnoy maintains a work rate that would have most drummers (hell, most people) quaking in their boots. Since leaving Dream Theater in 2011 he's juggled playing with a range of proggy supergroups and

projects including Flying Colours, Transatlantic, the Neal Morse Band, the Winery Dogs, Sons Of Apollo, Metal Allegiance and Adrenaline Mob.

PHIL COLLINS

Before Phil Collins was a frontman and a pop star, he was Genesis's not-so-secret weapon. Anyone who's watched him play since then will know that his prodigious ability hasn't left him. "Phil Collins was an enormous influence on my drumming in the seventies, and thus remains a part of my playing even today," Neil Peart has said. For a lesser-known but impressive display of Phil's drumming, check out the drum duet *The Big Bang* that he recorded with his eldest son Simon on the latter's 2008 solo album *U-Catastrophe*.

GAVIN HARRISON

Prog fans might first recognise Harrison as the guy who joined Porcupine Tree for 2002's seminal album *In Absentia*, playing a notable part in the band's game-raising gear change. Since then he's played for many others and, following an initial stint in 2008, joined King Crimson as a regular member (in an unusual but highly effective three-drummer set-up) in 2013. As of 2018 he's also been a full-time member of the Pineapple Thief. "It's like Mario Andretti said about driving a Ferrari: if everything is under control, then you're just not going fast enough," Harison has said. "There should be some seat-of-the-pants moments in every concert."

CARL PALMER

The last man standing from classic prog heroes Emerson Lake & Palmer, Carl is one of the most revered drummers in the genre. "I actually started off playing banjo when I was five," he told *Prog*. "Had a go on the violin when I was ten and moved to the drum set when I was eleven. I learned by ear to start with, but then I got a teacher and learned to read. The story was that my family thought that as long as you could read music you always had a chance of getting a job somewhere."

MARCO MINNEMANN

Depending on your level of modern prog (and/or drumming) geekery, statuesque German virtuoso Marco Minneman might not ring as many bells as some of the better-known stars on this list, but he's an eye-popping joy to watch. Besides getting up to genre-mashing mischief with Guthrie Govan in The Aristocrats, Minneman has also worked with Joe Satriani, Alex Lifeson, Steve

A live powerhouse: (l-r) David Cross, John Wetton, Bill Bruford, Robert Fripp.

GETTY X5

> **"Before *Red* we could never recreate that kind of power in the studio. It just wouldn't happen."**
>
> **John Wetton**

Europe and, in mid-April, the USA. The King Crimson that returned to the UK in July '73 was not only tired after playing more than 60 shows, but also in dire need of new material to refresh the set-list and prepare for the next album.

Reconvening after a three-week holiday, spirits and tempers were frayed rather than rested. What had been a break for some turned out to be a busman's holiday for Fripp, who emerged from his Dorset cottage with the tunes *Fracture*, *The Night Watch* and *Lament*.

As the group worked on the new material, bad tempers flashed. According to Bill Bruford, Crimson's writing processes were exercises in "excruciating, teeth-pullingly difficult music making. The tunes Robert has written all the way through, such as *Fracture*, these are good, and had there been greater output from Robert we'd have got on quicker and faster. Robert's always done this."

"I was never given the time to write," counters Fripp. "The band had a three-and-a-half-week holiday. I had three days. I recall on another occasion saying to the band that I needed time to write, rather than just continuing to rehearse. Bill, in a schoolmasterly and rather grudging fashion, would only agree if I really would do the writing, as opposed to what he implied was goofing off."

The gnawing antipathy that became a defining characteristic of Fripp and Bruford's subsequent professional relationship first surfaced in these rehearsal sessions, sewing the seeds of the band's demise a year later.

Putting their differences aside, Crimson took to the road with their newly composed repertoire and their near-telepathic ability to create complex and nuanced improvisations off the top of their heads. When they played at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, a mobile recording studio captured them in full aleatoric flight.

Although many rock bands of the time filled their sets with instrumental music, these usually boiled down to extended solos over relatively straightforward blues-based changes (with a few exceptions, one of them being German experimentalists Can). Even away from jamming-oriented groups, the rhythmic and harmonically complex improvisations Crimson specialised in between the winter of 1972 and their break-up in 1974 drew more upon the atonal and dramatic vocabulary of contemporary classical music as a reference point than on any of the prevailing trends in rock the scene.

While Crimson might have been contemporaries of ELP, Genesis and Yes, Fripp says that "King

Crimson were nothing like the other bands of its generation. More accurately, the other bands – all more popular, liked and commercially successful, with their own triumphs and failures – were nothing like King Crimson."

Back in the UK in January 1974, and with three new tracks in the can at George Martin's AIR Studios in London, the band sifted through the many live multi-track tapes from the tour, choosing the best improvisations and scrupulously editing the tapes to remove any hint of audience noise or applause. From the results it was impossible to tell what had been improvised in concert and what had been recorded in the studio.

When *Starless And Bible Black* was released in that spring, not even the record company knew that it was essentially a live recording. Such secrecy by the band might have come from knowing that record labels paid a reduced royalty rate on live albums. The truth only emerged several years after Crimson split up.

'Crimson's writing processes were exercises in "excruciating, teeth-pullingly difficult music making".'

Bill Bruford

John Wetton was proud of the results. "For me, it shows us moving into another dimension as far as being a band is concerned," he said. "We'd found our feet; we'd been on the road for the best part of a year. We knew what we wanted to do and we were getting creative. Not only is the album chronologically the bridge between *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* and *Red*, it's also a bridge in many more ways. We were getting more experimental, trying different recording techniques, really screwing with the system, removing applause from live tracks so they sound like studio tracks – the exact opposite of what people do today where they add applause to a studio track and pretend it's live. We'd removed the audience because that was the only way we could get the atmosphere we were after. Before *Red*, we could never recreate that kind of power in the studio – it just wouldn't happen. You're in a sterile environment, whereas on stage you'd got all that air and people and you'd got energy."

Wetton looked back on the period in which the album was made with real affection – even that impromptu marriage proposal he escaped from in Rome. In 2014 he was asked to rummage through his collection of memorabilia for anything that might be useful in a then forthcoming *Starless* box set. Among the accrued detritus of more than four decades spent on the road with various bands, he found a ticket stub for the gig at Palazzetto dello Sport. On the back of it was the girl's name and telephone number. "She'd be about fifty-five years old now," he said with a smile.

Hackett, Steven Wilson, Jordan Rudess, the Sea Within and In Continuum, among others. Check out videos of him playing on YouTube. Apart from being outrageously talented, he always seems to have fun doing it.

DANNY CAREY
Tool's fifth album *Fear Inoculum* proved that Danny Carey is one of rock's most articulate players, crafting sinuous, writhing rhythms in odd time signatures that would leave lesser drummers getting their sticks in a tangle. In addition to melting minds with enigmatic progressive/alt.rock heavyweights Tool since 1990, he's also played with an eclectic range of artists including Adrian Belew, Melvins, Primus and Carole King.

BILL BRUFORD
Having co-founded Yes, played with King Crimson, toured with Genesis and performed on records by Rick Wakeman, Steve Howe, Chris Squire and many more, Bill Bruford has had fingers in more iconic prog pies than most. Much of his passion, as can be heard in his playing, comes from jazz. "After [Soft Machine drummer] Robert Wyatt there was precious little jazz in progressive rock," he told *Prog*. "Progressive rock owed nothing to jazz at all. I think from day one with Yes I was subconsciously trying to find a way back to performance with those characteristics. Joining Crimson was a step on that path."

MIKE MANGINI
Filling Dream Theater co-founder Mike Portnoy's shoes was never going to be an easy job, but Mike Mangini – who previously had played with Annihilator, Steve Vai and Extreme – was more than up to the task, and has played on every Dream Theater album since 2011's *A Dramatic Turn Of Events*. The ambidextrous musician flies around the kit with a speed and power to rival Bruce Lee.

PAT MASTELOTTO
As a session drummer, Pat Mastelotto worked with artists including Martin Briley, the Pointer Sisters and Kenny Loggins before forming AOR band Mr Mister, who had huge success with hit singles *Kyrie* and *Broken Wings*. Most notably, however, he's been a member of King Crimson since 1994, as well as playing drums with Stick Men and Ork. "I didn't listen to that much jazz as a kid growing up," he told MusicRadar. "I'm from the rock generation – The Beatles, Cream and Hendrix and all that."

GETTY

HEART OF DARKNESS

They were the band that invented goth, saved punk from parody, made incredible music and gave rock a true icon. The editor of *Zigzag* magazine at the time of their rise tells the story of **Siouxsie And The Banshees**.

Words: **Kris Needs**

Imperious, confrontational and bewitching, Siouxsie And The Banshees started out as the ultimate manifestation of punk's DIY spirit, ultimately spearheading the movement into its subsequent post-punk phase. Fearlessly experimental but boasting an uncanny pop sensibility, their 20-year reign would see them invent goth while regularly enlivening the charts with edgy, classic singles.

Perhaps the most imitated British female singer of all time, Siouxsie was the UK's Debbie Harry, using success to fulfil unpredictable visions, confuse copyists and make a stand for strong women in the music business. The massively influential records the Banshees released between 1978 and 1995 stand among the most timelessly evocative, provocative and compelling of their era, with songs tackling schizophrenia, childhood trauma, fatal compulsion, lacerated love and serial killers. I accompanied many bands through this pivotal time. None of them matched the Banshees in the uncompromising, sometimes shocking single-mindedness of their mission.

For Susan Ballion of Chislehurst, the band marked the culmination of her escape from suburban normality. She had an isolated childhood, exacerbated by an alcoholic father and sexual assault at nine, her internal world fuelled by horror stories and older siblings' Otis Redding records. Transformed and validated when Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* album came along in 1972, Susan got her first taste of night life when accompanying her go-go dancer sister to work, flaunting provocative fetish images – self-described "armour" – as she found sanctuary in London's underground gay clubs. She met like-minded misfit Steven Bailey from Bromley at a Roxy Music gig, and the pair started going to early Sex Pistols shows with fellow local malcontents, who were dubbed 'the Bromley contingent' by press.

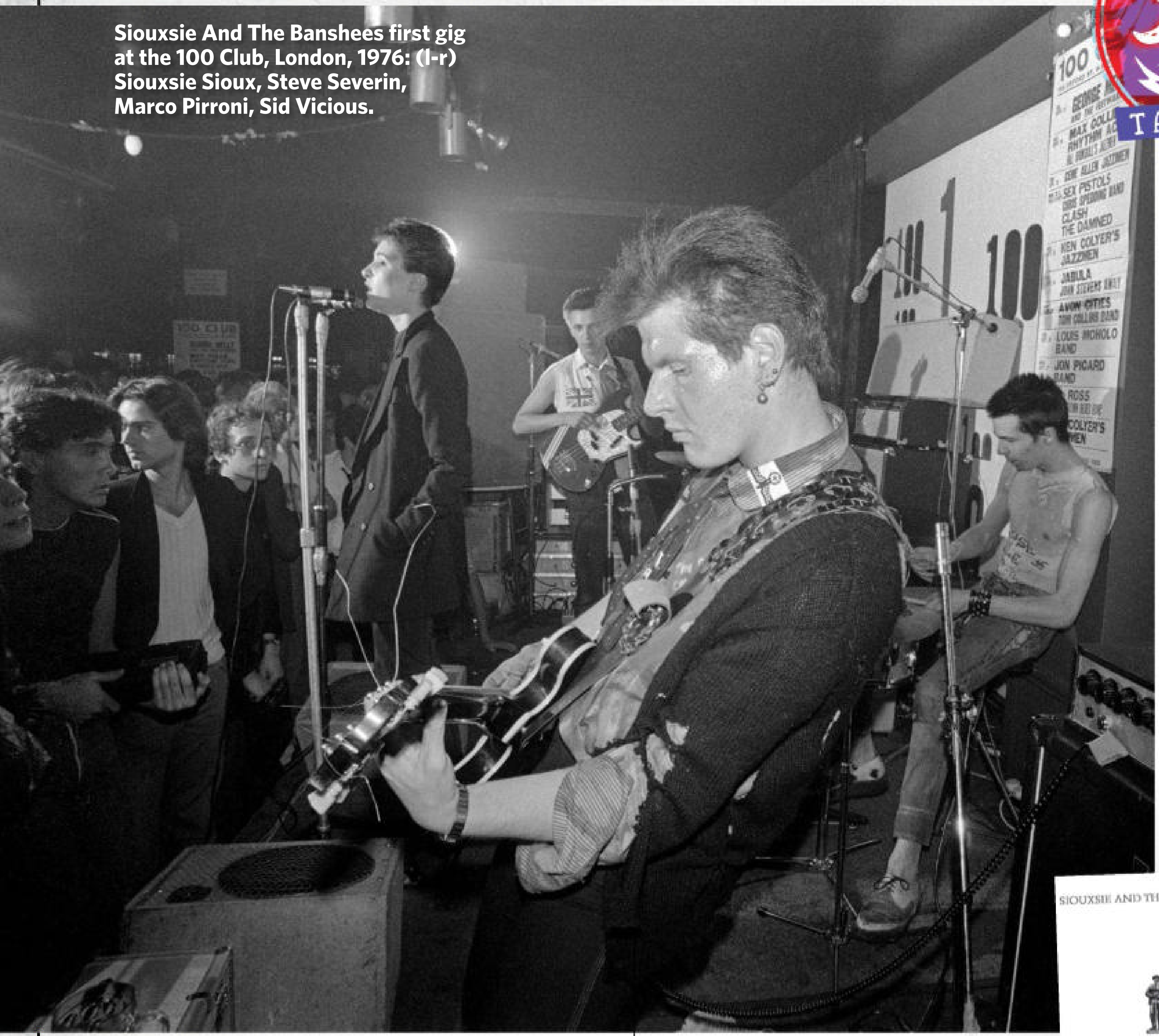
"We just like to get people's backs up. We've got a morbid sense of humour."

Siouxsie Sioux

While Suzie (as she was initially billed) introduced the Pistols crowd to multi-sexual Soho niterie Louise's, her and Bailey (soon to be renamed Severin) embraced the scene around Malcolm McLaren's SEX shop, stepping up to promoter Ron Watts when he needed a band to open for the Pistols and The Clash at his 100 Club punk festival. The night before, she came up with the name Suzie And The Banshees as Severin picked up a bass for the first time. With (future Ants) guitarist Marco Pirroni, and their mate Sid Vicious on drums, they piled through *The Lord's Prayer*, incorporating *She Loves You*, *Twist And Shout*, *Deutschland Uber Alles* and *Knocking On Heaven's Door* for 20 minutes before getting bored and stopping. Soon after, Suzie ignited the Pistols' outburst on Bill Grundy's infamous TV debacle when fielding unwanted advances from the host.

Bringing in drummer Kenny Morris (who'd rehearsed with Sid's Flowers Of Romance) and guitarist Pete Fenton, the Banshees began to explore brazen ideas and provocative lyrics, abusing rock's traditions and embracing taboos, all the while admiring the simplicity of glam-rock.

Their next gig was supporting Johnny Thunders And The Heartbreakers for Watts at High Wycombe's Nag's Head in March 1977, during which they careered through *Love In A Void* and *Make Up To Break Up*, plus T.Rex's ▷



Siouxsie And The Banshees first gig at the 100 Club, London, 1976: (l-r) Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Severin, Marco Pirroni, Sid Vicious.

TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY TAYLOR HAWKINS

They were an influence on so many people. I discovered *Juju* in my early 20s and went: "Oh my god." This is obviously what everyone in The Cure and Joy Division were listening to back then. Siouxsie Sioux has a fucking beautiful voice, and so many singers were influenced by her. I don't think Bono would sing like Bono on those early U2 records if he hadn't heard her. I don't think Perry Farrell would sing like Perry Farrell sings. She was really one of the first great goth icons. I'm a drummer, and the way Budgie played drums was so influential – the tribal thing he was doing was very innovative.

20th Century Boy and the *Captain Scarlet* TV theme tune. Strutting in stilettos like a pre-war Berlin cabaret madame, Suzie had become Siouxsie by the time they started playing London's Roxy club later that month. Female punks relished having their own inspirational figurehead.

"We're just not like everyone else," Siouxsie declared when I put her on the cover of *Zigzag* magazine that October. "We just like to get people's backs up. We've got a morbid sense of humour." Later she stressed: "I don't want to appear as some kind of Women's Libber, cos I'm not, but neither am I someone who lets herself be pushed around and manipulated. I've got a mind of my own."

By the time they played the opening night of London's Vortex club that July, co-headlining with the Slits, catalysed by John McKay replacing Fenton the Banshees' punky attack had morphed into majestic, disturbing onslaughts like *Suburban Relapse*.

Crowned 'The Ice Queen', Siouxsie was gaining popularity and appearing on magazine front covers, but the Banshees couldn't get a suitable record deal, receiving only insulting offers and rejections from A&R men. After their John Peel session in December became the most requested in the show's history, the DJ even suggested releasing the Banshees on BBC Records. Fans sprayed 'SIGN THE BANSHEES' on record company doors, gigs sold out, and their self-promoted event at Alexandra Palace was well-attended.

Deciding that a *Zigzag* cover (designed by Severin) might help, my accompanying interview became a celebration when Polydor Records' Chris Parry secured their signatures by promising them control over packaging, promotion and track choices. Meeting the band in Soho Square, an ebullient Sioux seemed almost shocked. I asked if she foresaw problems with Polydor marketing her as a UK Debbie Harry.

"Yes!" she said. "Every record company we've come into contact with wanted to do that, but we were aware of it. That's how we could stop it. It's like a barrier. If it's a girl, 'Oh, she's just flogging an image, she hasn't got anything to say.' They like that. Whereas if they think she's got as much there as anyone else, and more so, they don't like it. Everyone's so conditioned to think men say this and girls follow behind or just look pretty. We don't exist if we don't have something to fight against.

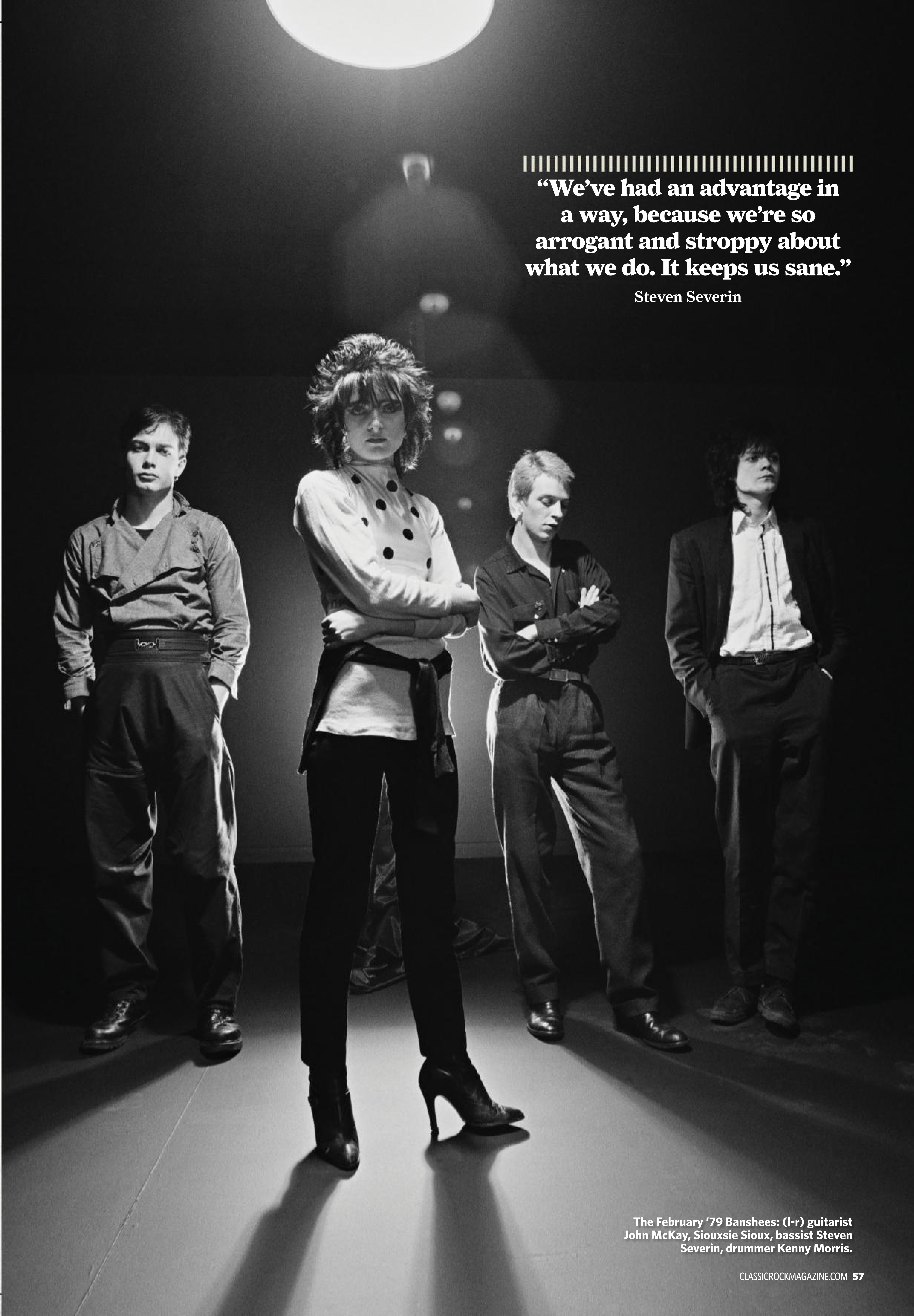
"I can't understand bands that are in love with the idea of being underground," she continued. "If we got to Number One on *Top Of The Pops* it'd be a great achievement. It is starting and it's what we're striving for. If everybody starts liking us, then we're going to find it very hard!"

Released in August 1978, *Hong Kong Garden*, with its infectious xylophone fanfare, reached No.7 as a glorious post-punk pop single. Its lyrics were inspired by a Chislehurst Chinese restaurant suffering racist skinhead attacks ('*harmful elements in the air*').

The Scream, produced by Steve Lillywhite, is one of the era's great debut albums. Dark, dramatic and utterly new, it redefined traditional voice-guitar-bass-drums line-ups. McKay's guitar sparked malevolent thunder clouds over Severin's pulsing bass, while Sioux was a regal, animated presence on *Jigsaw Feeling*'s monolithic surge, the desolate *Overground* and *Suburban Relapse*'s harrowing, JG Ballard-influenced nightmare. After they'd savaged The Beatles' *Helter Skelter*, the epic *Switch* busted punk's three-minute barrier ▷

Siouxsie and guitarist Peter Fenton with the Banshees at The Roxy, London, 1977.

TAYLOR: DANNY CLINCH; TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; BOTTOM: GETTY



"We've had an advantage in a way, because we're so arrogant and stroppy about what we do. It keeps us sane."

Steven Severin

The February '79 Banshees: (l-r) guitarist John McKay, Siouxsie Sioux, bassist Steven Severin, drummer Kenny Morris.

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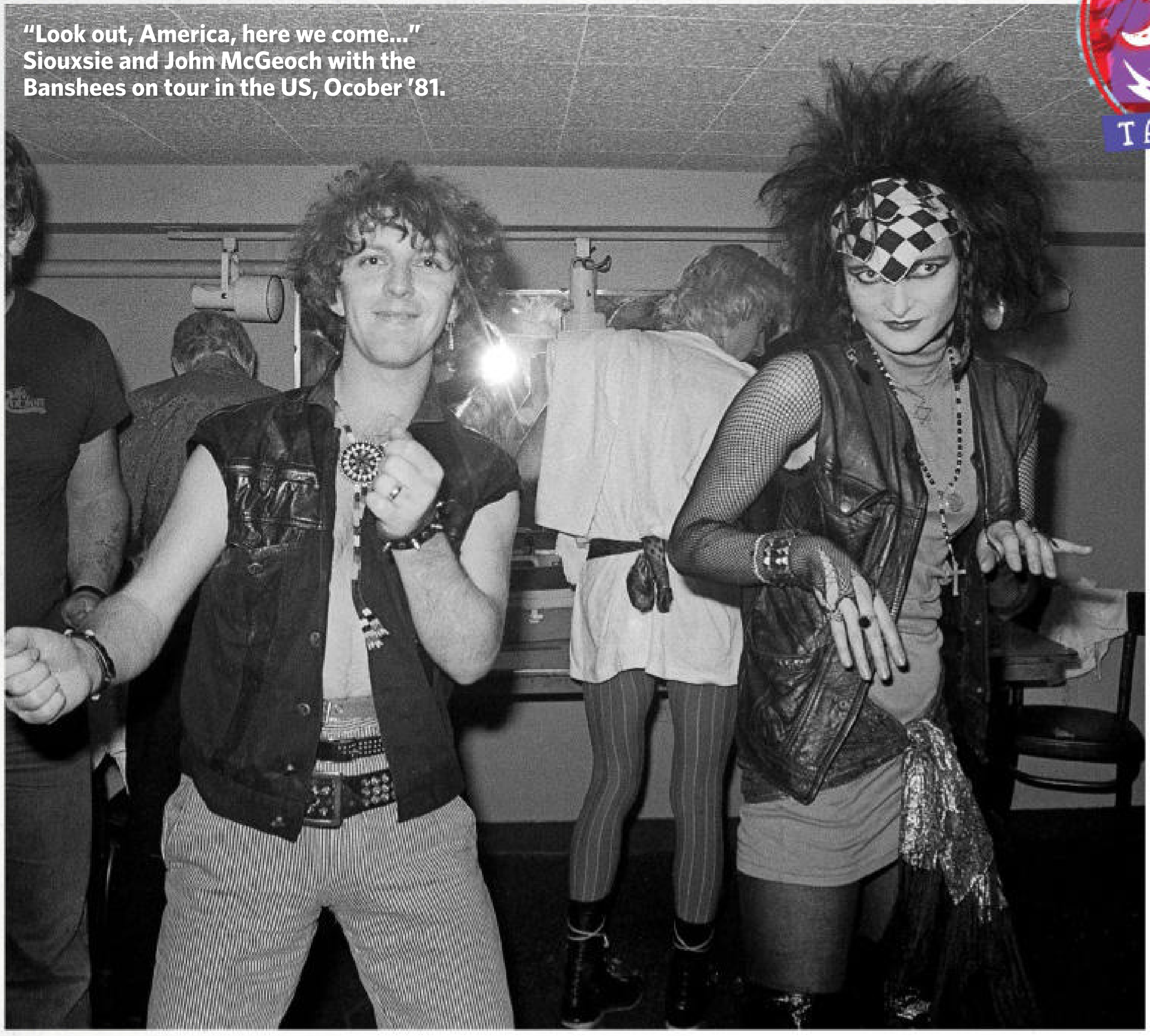


"Look out, America, here we come..." Siouxsie and John McGeoch with the Banshees on tour in the US, Ocober '81.

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY PAT SMEAR

It's the first album [*The Scream*] for me. It's so weird and great, and she's so compelling. And the guitar playing is so fucking good on it. There are a lot of guitarists who you listen to when you're a novice that are so inspiring that you feel like you can reach that. Then Eddie Van Halen comes out and you feel like you should throw your guitar away – "I'll never be able to do that, what's the fucking point?" Almost the opposite of inspiring, cos they're too good. But all the guitar playing on that first Banshees album really inspired me.

as Sioux highlighted the grim consequences of a scientist, a doctor and a vicar swapping identities. Greeted with effervescent reviews, *The Scream* shot to No.12 in the UK album chart.

Two commanding singles later – the sinister waltz of *The Staircase (Mystery)* and the flanged-up onslaught of *Playground Twist* – second album *Join Hands* was underscored by the isolation that Sioux still felt occasionally. The album took inspiration from World War One's carnage for its memorial cover and ominous *Poppy Day* intro. The juggernaut grandeur of *Regal Zone*, *Icon* and a spine-freezing *Premature Burial* was offset by a softly disturbing *Mother*, which found Sioux singing sweetly over a music box playing *Oh Mein Papa* (before cataclysmic closer *The Lord's Prayer*).

Join Hands tour warm-ups in Bournemouth and Friars Aylesbury were marked by the rift opening between Sioux-Severin and McKay-Morris that started at rehearsal. When Sioux, Severin and crew indulged their (little-reported) sense of humour, the other two tut-tutted like Victorian grumblers. Accompanying a sozzled McKay and Morris for a midnight stroll on Bournemouth beach, I listened to their discontent about fame's pressures. An ice curtain descended the next day when driving to Aylesbury in minder/tour manager Mick Murphy's customised van (along with crew members, they shared this gentle giant with Motörhead, the two bands enjoying a mutual respect).

Two days later, Morris and McKay flounced out of a record store signing in Aberdeen, never to be seen again. That night, at Aberdeen Music Hall, support band The Cure played a longer set before Sioux and Severin appeared to explain the situation. The Cure returned and played works-in-progress, joined by Sioux and Severin for a defiant *The Lord's Prayer*.

Sioux and Severin seized the shake-up as a chance to move forward, nicking drummer Budgie from the Slits while Robert Smith played guitar with the Banshees after his Cure set. It sounded amazing even at rehearsal.

"Isn't it great not to have a pair of old women moaning away in the corner?" a grinning Sioux said in the pub.

> **"I can't understand bands that are in love with the idea of being underground. If we got to Number One it'd be a great achievement."**
>
> **Siouxsie Sioux**

A rescheduled tour opening night in Leicester saw the rejuvenated Banshees driven by Dunkirk spirit and a bright new buzz, with Sioux strutting, skipping, dancing, working herself into a frenzy on *Suburban Relapse*. Drummer Budgie was a polyrhythmic powerhouse, while Smith weaved in ethereal subtleties. Afterwards he said: "I was blown away by how powerful I felt playing that kind of music. It was so different to what we were doing with The Cure." His Banshees experience catalysed his new look and The Cure's next phase.

After auditioning vainly for a new guitarist, the Banshees enticed John McGeoch from Magazine. Completed with the newly rejigged line-up, their catchily insane single *Happy House* brought the Banshees a brilliant Top-20 return in March 1980.

While recording at Polydor's studio, Sioux glowed with delight as she told me: "It's given me and Steve a good kick up the arse to just do things. In the end we've got to thank John and Kenny for leaving. It's turned out for the better that they left. I feel very jolly lately. It's almost like starting again, which is how we wanted it. We're all really excited by anything that's unpredictable. Some sort of pressure, so you drive yourself rather than have someone to make you do something. It's down to yourself to get out of your mess. The new album's called *Kaleidoscope* because of the nature of the situation we're in. It's fragmented, but every fragment is strong, bright and positive."

With Sioux writing on her new synthesiser and Severin his drum machine, new songs *Christine* and *Eve White, Eve Black* were inspired by *The Three Faces Of Eve*, a book (and subsequently a 1957 film) about Christine Sizemore, who hosted 22 different personalities. "They all had different names, which was a really good source for the lyrics," Severin explained: "The Strawberry Girl, Banana-Split Lady, the Purple Lady, The Turtle Lady…"

The Banshees' third album, *Kaleidoscope*, was their most commercially successful yet, beaming to No.5. It was followed by the atmospheric *Israel*, which welcomed the liberation of 12-inch singles.

The band weren't about to stop there. After touring the US for the first time, they descended on co-producer Nigel Gray's Surrey Sound studio to record *Juju*. For many, this is their best album. May '81 single *Spellbound* made an evocatively dynamic trailer, with blazing pyrotechnics from McGeoch and thunderous dynamics from Budgie. The album itself displayed Sioux and Severin's ▷

PAT: DANNY CLINCH; TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK

The Music Machine, London, April 19, 1978.

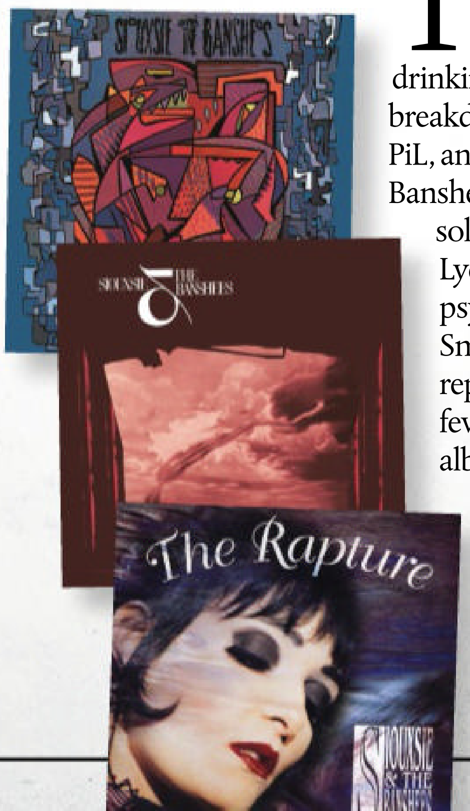
CAMERA PRESS/PAUL SLATTERY

Steve Severin, Budgie, Siouxsie Sioux and Robert Smith during the latter's '82-84 period as a Banshee.

creative muse on stunning form, with *Arabian Knights*, *Voodoo Dolly* and *Nightshift* (about a serial killer) imbued with cinematic depth.

Covering July's *Juju* tour for *Zigzag*, I joined the merchandise stand crew and noticed the goth movement starting to emerge, with Siouxsie And The Banshees as reluctant figureheads. This could have been the band's live peak, gloriously Gothic (in the original sense), raising the bar for mesmerising rock theatre. Drapes parted to reveal clouds moving behind four stark silhouettes on the custom-built perspex stage striking up *Israel*. Different settings were used for each song: dusky moonlit evening for *Arabian Knights*; blood-red inferno for *Sin In My Heart*; lightning striking the stained glass window in *Nightshift*. Afterwards the band signed autographs while we sold T-shirts; worlds away from the aloof beings presented by the press.

Arising from sound-check jamming, Sioux and Budgie's voice-drum duet *But Not Them* was a *Juju* outtake that swelled into their spin-off project The Creatures. They released the double-EP *Wild Things*, which included *Mad-Eyed Screamer* and their take on The Troggs' 1966 classic *Wild Thing*. Meanwhile, Severin produced tour support Altered Images, including No.2 hit *Happy Birthday*.



Back in the Banshees' camp, 1982's singles *Fireworks* and *Slowdive* preceded the swamp visions and pyramids of fifth album *A Kiss In The Dreamhouse*, on which their love of psychedelic Beatles charged experiments such as having backwards strings on *Circle*. At a sneak preview at Camden's Playground studios, Sioux explained that the Dreamhouse was a 1930s Hollywood whorehouse, and *Juju* "like closing an era. That's why we waited a long time before recording a new LP, so we could work out of that."

"I was blown away by how powerful I felt playing that kind of music."
Robert Smith

The changes taking place were compounded by a heavy-drinking McGeoch suffering a nervous breakdown and departing (he joined PiL, and died in his sleep in 2004). The Banshees decided to tour less and do solo projects. Severin played with Lydia Lunch and had a blast making psychedelic whoopee with Robert Smith as The Glove. The Creatures replaced goth shackles with jungle-fever loincloths on their 1983 album *Feast*. That same year, with goth in full swing, the Banshees stood surveying their exotic children at the bar of Soho's Batcave (where I DJ'd), laughing their heads off. With Smith returning briefly, their baroque-psych version of The Beatles' *Dear Prudence* reached No.3, and their triumphant gig at London's Royal Albert Hall in 1983 gig was captured on their live record *Nocturne*.

The Banshees took such peaks as licence to experiment on their hallucinogenic album *Hyaena*, notable for (among other things) the Camden Palace dancefloor-friendly gallop of *Dazzle*. Orchestral arrangements of old Banshees songs were captured on *The Thorn* EP, introducing new guitarist John Carruthers, previously with Clock DVA (after he passed his initiation playing a gig at a lunatic asylum in Milan), along with keyboard player/cellist Martin McCarrick.

When the Banshees toured in autumn 1985 (while recording seventh album *Tinderbox*), Sioux's leg was in plaster after she cracked her knee at their Hammersmith Odeon show. At the show I saw at Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall, she might have been perched on a stool, but she still berated crowd-bashing bouncers before Severin dropped his bass and steamed in. In typical fashion, the fracas ignited a killer set, the Banshees powering like a juggernaut dervish, although Sioux maintained she'd been "trying to break glass with my voice rather than break heads with my mic stand". New song *Candy Man* was one of the blackest in their black catalogue, emotionally sung from experience by Sioux, who told me it was

ALAMY/PHOTOSHOT

On reflection...
Siouxsie in 1980.

"against the perpetrators of incest or child-molesting, using a sickly-sweet person as the theme".

Sioux and Severin were almost 10-year veterans by then, and still refusing to sell their souls or become self-parodies.

"We're lucky we're not so big that we're untouchable," said Severin. "It still matters that when we go on stage we have to be good and live up to our reputation. We've never slogged up and down the motorway for no reason other than to get famous. We've had an advantage in a way, because we're so arrogant and stroppy about what we do it keeps us sane. We still have interest and time to breathe around everything. That's the only way you can carry on and still be good. A big reason we've kept going is because it hasn't been the same format and personnel. We're nine years old and I don't think we're crap."

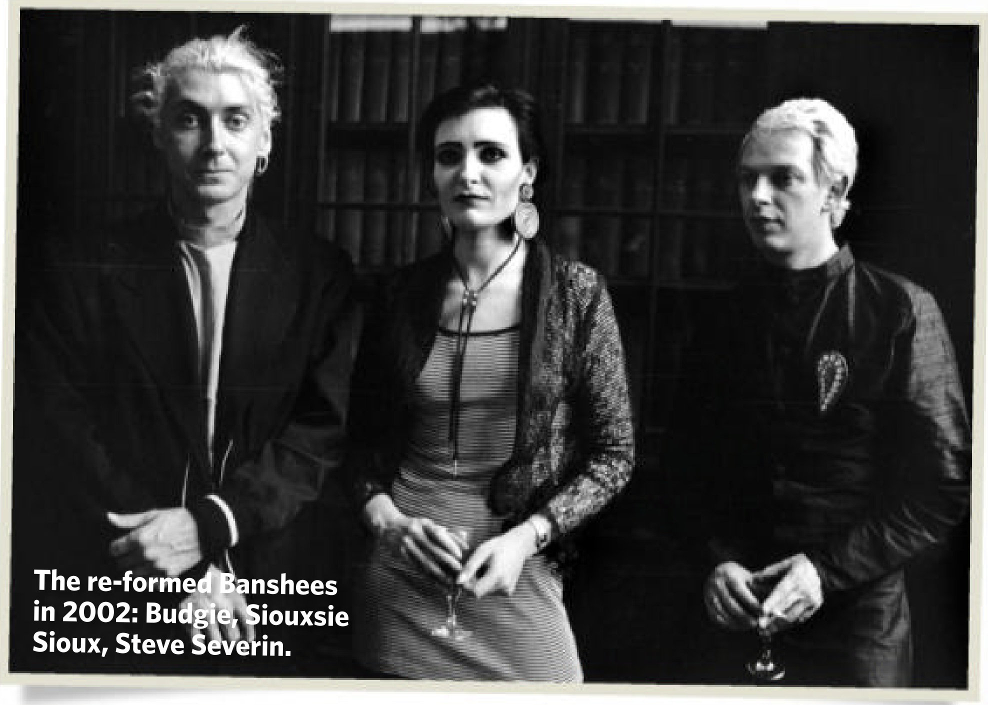
"All mistakes somehow seem swayed in our favour, mishaps or bad luck turned to our advantage," added Sioux. "That's all; you cannot bemoan it or feel sorry for yourself. I think being really good friends is important. So many groups hate each other, don't socialise or even work well together. It's no way to live your life, really."

After covers album *Through The Looking Glass*, 1988's *Peepshow* introduced Specimen guitarist Jon Klein, before Sioux and Budgie took another Creatures detour with 1989's *Boomerang* (Jeff Buckley later covered the song *Killing Time*). They also got married and relocated to south-west France.

The Banshees returned with 1991's *Superstition*, with producer Stephen Hague stoking Sioux's disdain for studio computers.

1995's *The Rapture*, part-produced by John Cale, became the Banshees' swansong. In 1984, asked if he would know when it was time to finish the Banshees, Severin told *Zigzag*: "I hope so, and I believe we would know. The understanding between Sioux and I wouldn't allow us to carry on if that feeling wasn't there. It's instinctive and I trust it."

That moment came in 1996, as nostalgia raged for punk's twentieth anniversary with a Sex Pistols reunion. Sioux stated: "I just think it's the most dignified thing to do for the idea of the band and the spirit in which it started. We've had a fantastic journey."



The re-formed Banshees in 2002: Budgie, Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Severin.

"We're not so big we're untouchable. It still matters that when we go on stage we have to be good."

Steven Severin

Siouxsie and Budgie continued as the Creatures before splitting around 2004. Siouxs's next release was 2007's *Mantaray*, her robustly diverse solo debut. Her last recorded statement was 2015's haunting *Love Crime*, for the *Hannibal* TV series finale. Operating at a lower level, Severin composed film and TV soundtracks, released instrumental albums and played solo in front of silent films.

The last time I saw them I was DJing for Metallica at London dance club Ministry Of Sound in 1997. The Banshees now gone, we laughed at that journey we'd been on after that 20-minute set became a 20-year career. They reunited once, a core trio joined by guitarist Knox Chandler, for 2002's *Seven Year Itch* tour, from which came the following year's live album of the same name. The set-list for the tour favoured early album tracks rather than their greatest hits, typifying a band whose influence had burned into rock's fabric.

Today, Siouxsie's image and statements are evident in many a female singer speaking their mind and following their own path. Siouxsie And The Banshees saved punk from parody, scored transcendent hit records, invented goth and still went out with rare dignity.

One of a kind, once upon a time.

MAIN: CAMERA PRESS/DAVID ARNOFF; INSET: GETTY

BLAKE LITTLE/PRESS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
BOB MOULD

The internet has gone off the rails. He has a problem with hypocrites. Being a musician is a luxury. Getting older brings its rewards… These are among the things that shape his world view.

Interview: **Emma Johnston**

With his venerated alt.rock bands Hüsker Dü and Sugar as well as his solo material, Bob Mould's influence has stretched far and wide. Always one to wear his heart on his sleeve, lyrically speaking, he's not one to shy away from the big subjects, as his most recent album *Blue Hearts* proves. A spectacular piece of work, it lashes out at the political right wing, social prejudice and evangelical hypocrisy. Chatting from his San Francisco home, in the week when the US election result is announced, he's got a lifetime of wisdom to impart.

AMERICA IS PROBABLY EVEN MORE DIVIDED THAN IT APPEARS

Yesterday I started chasing down a piece of legislation that came into effect after the Second World War, called The Fairness Doctrine. It was put in place to give equal time to opposing views on television and in radio. In 1987 that got turned back by the Reagan [administration]. There's a school of thought that that was where partisanship really took hold. And it does correspond with the rise of Fox network and a lot of the more divisive, more polarising media views that started in the nineties. That's really where a lot of division in America was allowed to be amplified. And thirty-something years later we have just suffered through another four years of a telegenic, evangelical-based Republican.

"It's easy to make music. But to really share your thoughts, that's a daunting prospect."

THE HISTORIANS WILL DECIDE TRUMP'S LEGACY

I have a feeling it's going to be as terrible as anybody in the twenty-first century probably could do, all but a few in the twentieth century. I don't know how he's going to leave, but he will leave. If I have to go back to DC and take care of it myself I will. But I think we all have to have faith that good will triumph over evil in all cases. That's what keeps us going. I'm happy that it appears as of this moment that the Democrats are about to take control of the pandemic and the economy and all the things that need to be sorted out for the people of the United States, and hopefully with Joe Biden in charge we can start rebuilding a lot of relationships with the UK and Europe and the rest of the world. Building bridges instead of walls and all of that fun stuff.

CELEBRITY HAS BECOME MORE PERSUASIVE THAN SCIENCE

I guess it's more exciting if you're not into science or math. The idea of celebrity, it's a very powerful thing. And the past two decades with things like MySpace and LiveJournal, morphing into Facebook and Twitter, everyone gets a microphone and everyone can conjure up theories. And if they're persuasive enough they might get people who are looking for entertainment to believe it, as opposed to the majority of us who still trust most of the mainstream news to be somewhat credible. It's up to us to employ critical thinking when we read and hear things. It's tough. The internet was meant to be liberating information for people to learn and create community, and I don't think any of us saw it going quite so off the rails as it has in the past five years.

RELIGION HAS ITS PLACE

Growing up, I went to a Catholic church every Sunday with my mother, all the way through confirmation. When I was living in Washington DC in the noughties, I went back for another three years, to see if anything had changed. I gave it another shot, but it didn't seem like there was a place for me. I have no problem with religion the way I was taught it as a child. I didn't believe in it completely, but there's some basic ideas there that I think will apply forever – the whole 'do unto others' business, try to be kind to people. But back in the late seventies, early eighties in America when the moral majority really got a hold of politics and found a willing spokesperson in Ronald Reagan, that started setting everything on a course for where we are now. With a lot of the new evangelical types of religion in America, it's very profit-driven and I think they're taking advantage of people.

THE HARDCORE PUNK SCENE WAS WELCOMING TO EVERYBODY

It was a little macho to be sure, but there was room for anybody who could contribute. I don't think there was a lot of overt homosexuality that I can recall – there were a few people who were very out and flamboyant, and I'm grateful that they were. I was not one of them. I was keeping my sexuality mostly to myself, although it was an open secret. The hardcore scene in the 1980s was about building a community around music, and doing so because there wasn't a place for people like me who made non-commercial music. That was my focus more than trying to find a place that I fit sexually. Almost all of my energy went to my music as part of this scene that was truly alternative and trying to build our own world from the ground up.

HOME IS WHERE YOU MAKE IT

I've enjoyed any place that I've lived. I grew up in a small farm town in northern New York state. I didn't know anything different from that until high school, when I started going to Montreal to go to rock concerts. I'd been to New York City a couple of times as a kid, so I knew culture ▷

Bob Mould (right) with Hüsker Dü.

and all of those things were there, and I moved to the twin cities to go to university. Since then I've lived in a number of different places around New York City, which is always such an amazing place, Washington DC, Austin, Texas. The four years I spent in Berlin recently was an incredible time. I fell in love with the city, and the pandemic put an end to that. Anywhere I've lived really informs the work. Whether it's the weather or the customs or the music community, all of it adds so much. It's what makes each album a three-dimensional scrapbook of times and places. But I guess being a musician is a luxury; we're not tied to a desk, we can be anywhere we want to be, so I'm really grateful that I've taken full advantage of that over time.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL

This year in San Francisco was tough. We've had those orange days before, but nothing like in this past fire season. The pandemic is one thing, the unemployment is another thing, and when you start adding toxic outdoor air, there goes the one last thing that we have: we could go outside and walk. Unfortunately I feel like we're getting used to it, which is a really awful thing to say. We're really paying for this change now. I hope in January the US will get back on track with the Paris Climate Accord [Agreement] and everything that we were doing for eight years before late 2016 arrived.

WE CAN MITIGATE ANY FURTHER DAMAGE IF WE TRY

We can start to turn things around. It's going to take a massive overhaul of the entire infrastructure. Decoupling big business from government, especially the oil industry, takes decades and it takes convincing people. It's going to take a lot of global synchronisation. I'm optimistic, but it's sort of like it's easy to say 'black lives matter'. But to think about what really needs to be done to create equity, that's the hard part. Thinking about making those sacrifices as individuals, because that's what it'll come down to.

GAINING WISDOM IS THE BEST PART OF GETTING OLDER

It's being able to let go of certain parts of my personality that I would worry about, like worrying about what other people think. Sometimes, through the busy years of my life, I was just obsessing, worrying, trying to control every piece of everything. As I get older I don't have the time for that any more. It's a work in progress, and hopefully it'll lead me to a place where there's less things that I absolutely have to do. And hopefully that'll give me more time to work on the things that I love doing, whether that's music or spending time with my partner, or focusing on my personal health. And this year with the pandemic, a lot of those things became more into clear view a little more quickly. I'm not at the airport seventy-five days a year. It changes everything!

I THINK ABOUT RECONCILIATION A LOT

In the instance with Grant [Hart, Hüsker Dü drummer], we were never fully disconnected but there was always static or interference. When we were working on the *Numero* box set before Grant passed, I came back from Germany to visit, we had a nice weekend together just getting caught up, talking stuff through, and it was great. I always had nothing but the utmost of respect for Grant and his work. This clearly was a gifted guy and it was a real shame that he left way too soon. I'm not going to try and put it over as we were the best of friends at the end, we were the friends we were. But there's other people in my life where there's time and distance. I think it's okay to revisit friendships when people are in better places or healthier places. But some things are hard to go back to. All of us have relationships that ended due to entropy, acrimony, because of tragedy. It's always good to be mindful of them, but sometimes you can't go back.

"We can start to turn things around. It's going to take a massive overhaul of the entire infrastructure."

MEMORIES COME BACK THROUGH ART

Writing my book [*See A Little Light: The Trail Of Rage And Melody*] brought a lot of things I hadn't thought about in years back to the surface. When I look backwards and I go through my history, I try to make sense of it. When I was working on the box set, revisiting thirty years of work, I was surprised at how vivid the memories became when I started listening to all the music again. Hearing songs conjures the people back, it conjures the places, it conjures the situations… It gives me a good chance to think about people I am estranged from, people I have grown closer with. I should have known

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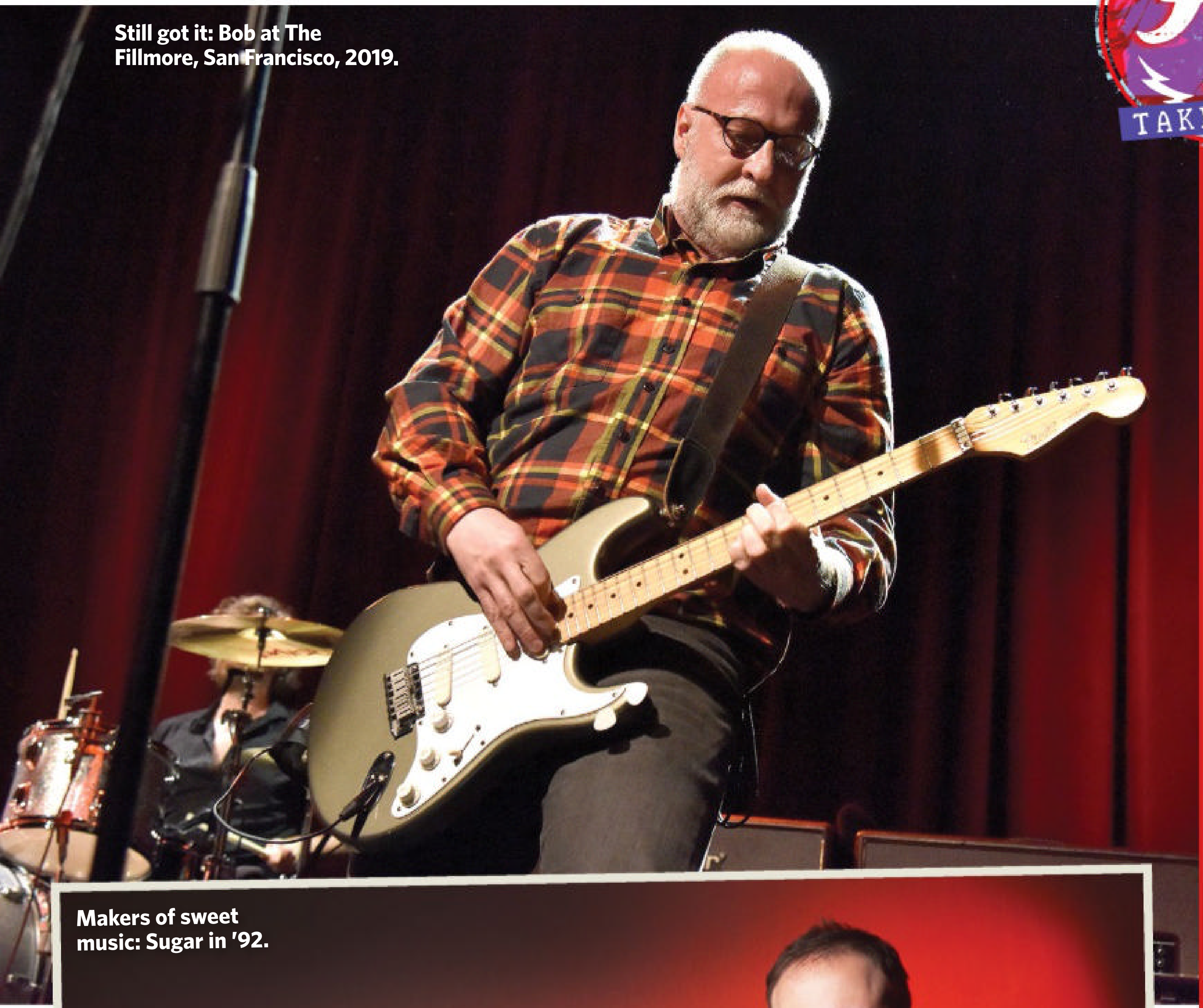

Still got it: Bob at The Fillmore, San Francisco, 2019.

Makers of sweet music: Sugar in '92.

TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY DAVE GROHL

Bob Mould should be placed in the highest ranks of America's greatest songwriters and lyricists. You can argue that he's just as influential in his own right as Tom Petty – he's a classic American songwriter, only writing from a different place to most.

When I discovered punk rock in the early eighties, there were bands that stood out because of their heaviness or speed or dissonance. But Hüsker Dü, which was Bob Mould's original band, had this sense of classic melody – it was also like a punk rock band playing Byrds songs – which they actually did when they covered *Eight Miles High*. But there was a entire sense of emotion, with beautiful melody, which could sometimes be countered with this anger and distortion, that was really unusual at the time.

And they were the first punk rock band that I listened to that had a double album – the *Zen Arcade* record, which went from breakneck thrash buzz-saw guitars to acoustic ballads. And having been raised on The Beatles and loving the White Album and the two 'greatest hits' records, *The Early Years* and *The Later Years*, there was something about that dynamic that I loved. I don't need a jackhammer rhythm all the time, especially if there's a lyric and a melody that I can hum. I can hum a Minor Threat song, but I can sing a Hüsker Dü song.

If you go back and listen, you'll hear his influence in the stuff I've done. So much that I reference Hüsker Dü in a lot of lyrics. There's even one reference on the new record. I like to drop little lines here and there.

I'd seen him play in 1984 or 1985, but I was just a stage-diving, slam-dancing kid singing along to the songs. I finally got to meet him maybe ten years ago. I said: "I just have to thank you, because I've really taken a lot from your music." And he said: "I know."

that the music is more powerful than just words, but it never really dawned on me until I was in the middle of it.

HAPPINESS IS LEARNING TO CHERISH THE SMALLER THINGS

Nice sunny days, time with people you care about, listening to people's stories, enjoying art and music, cooking food for people. At this point, being separated from the world for the last nine months, it makes me appreciate the simpler things that I have. It's been a good time to de-clutter. I would find happiness if I could just snap my fingers and everything in my life could rearrange into two piles: the pile that I want to take with me at the end, and the pile that can go into a museum or to the town dump. That would be absolute happiness, if I could snap my fingers and 'junk be gone'. If I could Marie Kondo my life!

NOT EVERYONE WILL WANT THE SAME THINGS AS YOU

I had low goals. I just wanted to write songs and tell stories, and once I found two other people to make this band and go around the world telling these stories, and meeting other people that were doing the same thing, that's when it gets difficult because you start to do well, you get different ambitions, and you get pulled in different directions. That's the part of the business that happens later, if you're lucky enough to have some kind of success. Then the expectations are placed on you, and that's where things start to go awry.

JUST MAKE THE MUSIC THAT YOU WANT

If you're a kid wanting to start out in music today, don't worry about whether you're going to be able to make a living at it. Don't get hung up on what other people are doing. It's easy to make music, but to be a creator or a writer, to really share your thoughts with people, that's a daunting prospect. Follow your instinct. Listen and learn and take in all the things that you love and it'll create a story inside of you, and you've got to tell that story as accurately as possible. If you tell it good, other people will hear it and go: "I know that story, I've been there," and tell other people. It's not really about the algorithms.

Blue Hearts is out now via Merge, and Bob's career-covering Distortion box sets are out now via Demon.

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THE PAIN & THE GLORY

For a short period in the 60s, the **Walker Brothers** were superstars: bigger than The Beatles, idolised and frantically mobbed by hysterical screaming girl fans – but unbearable for their main singer, who ultimately was chased out of the spotlight into new, enigmatic realms.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Forget The Beatles. By the spring of 1966 it was all about the Walker Brothers. Shrieking fans followed them everywhere. Shows were abandoned right from the start, with hysterical crowds intent on grabbing whatever souvenirs they could. "As soon as the three of us began playing our instruments, the girls ran on to the stage and attacked us, ripping our clothes and hair, knocking us over, pulling out cables and wreaking havoc everywhere," recalled John Walker. "It was complete chaos and mayhem."

The price of Walkermania was routinely measured in hard knocks. John passed out after a bunch of teenage girls choked him while ripping off his polo-neck sweater. Another time, while being chased down a flight of stairs he fell and smashed his head open. A desperate Scott Walker, sick of returning home bloodied and torn, and then to have fans pounding on his windows, took to wearing disguises in public. Gary Walker suffered similar intrusion. "The fans were like caged animals," he said in his and John's book *The Walker Brothers: No Regrets*. "They had glazed eyes… like looking into the eyes of predatory lions and tigers."

At that point, the Walker Brothers' fan club was reportedly bigger than The Beatles'. It wasn't difficult to understand their popularity. With their pin-up looks and sumptuous music – symphonic hymns to heartache and despair, set to Spector-like arrangements that inflamed the emotions – they were the antidote to 60s beat group pop.

The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore topped the UK singles chart in March '66, staying put for four weeks. It was the Walker Brothers' second No.1, after *Make It Easy On Yourself*, and established the trio as America's most popular musical export.

But it was all too intense to sustain itself. Especially for the deeply private Scott, who struggled with stage fright and quickly came to despise the trappings of celebrity. There were rumours of fall-outs, breakdowns and monastic escapes. By May 1967, the press announced that the Walker Brothers had split. It wasn't quite true (they reunited briefly the following year for a Japanese tour), but to all intents and purposes they were finished.

> **"The fans were like caged animals… like looking into the eyes of predatory lions and tigers."**
>
> **Gary Walker**

There would be an unexpected second act to the Walker Brothers' career, when they regrouped in the mid-70s. By then Scott Walker had established himself as pop's greatest enigma, a reclusive cult hero intent on following his own unique creative arc. History, however, has a habit of repeating itself. For the second and final time, the Walker Brothers' commercial prospects became a casualty of his singular journey into the avant garde. "It'd make a great tragedy, the Walker Brothers story," commented Scott. "It beats *Hamlet*."

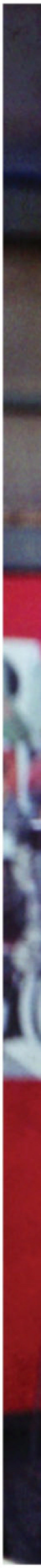
The Walker Brothers were never quite what they seemed. For starters, they weren't brothers at all. Each member had taken a different path to stardom. Raised in Ohio, the precocious Scott Engel landed roles in a couple of Broadway musicals as a teenager and was briefly mentored by actor/crooner Eddie Fisher. He was just 14 when he recorded his first single, 1957's *When Is A Boy A Man*, and was billed as fresh-faced 'Scotty Engel'.

After arriving in Los Angeles two years later, ▷

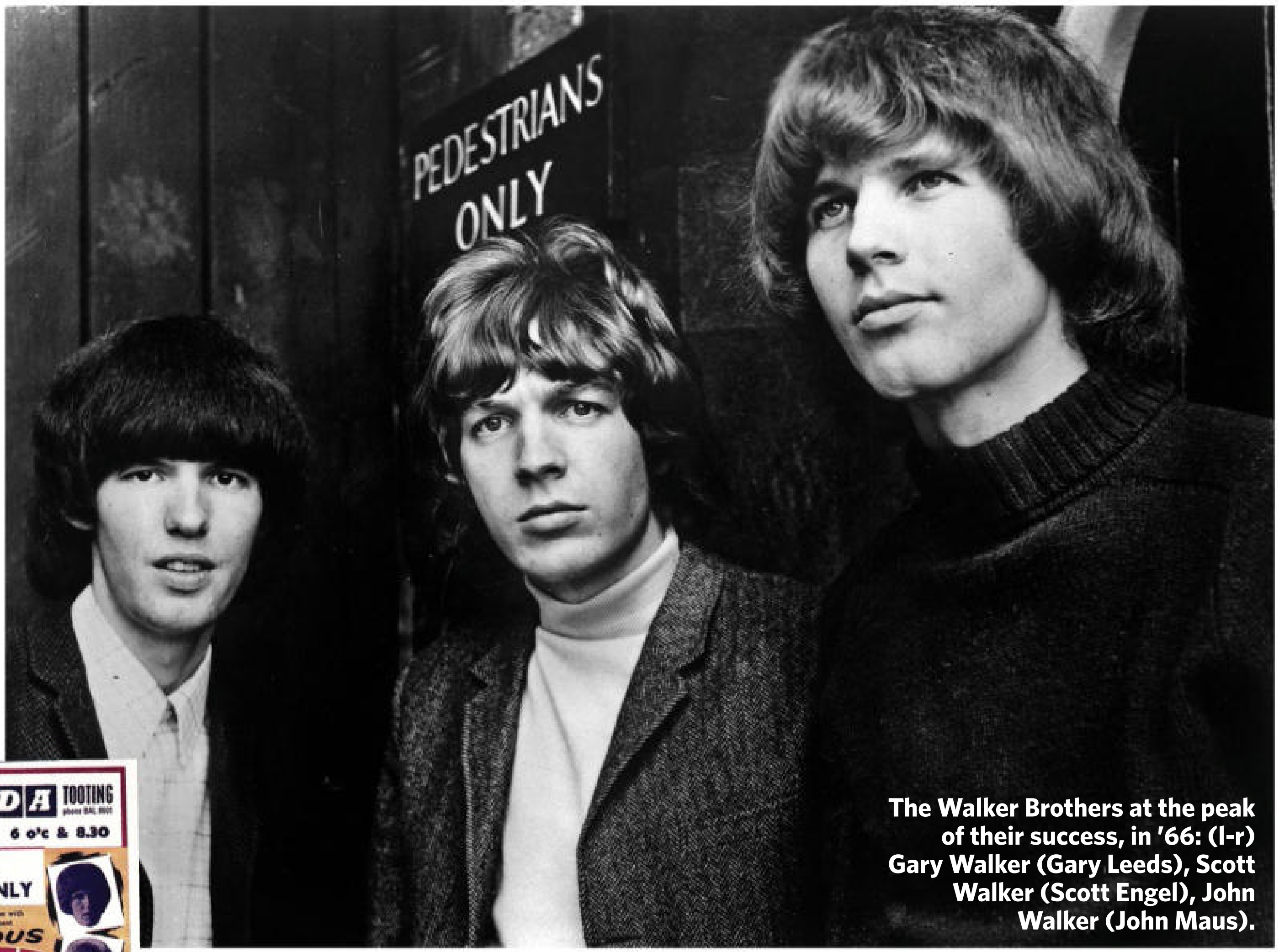
TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY NATE MENDEL

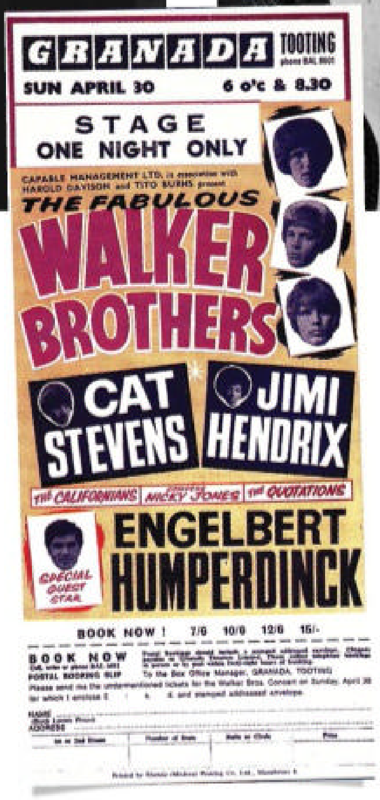
I'm the opposite of Taylor Hawkins – I don't have a deep knowledge of rock'n'roll. If I didn't run across it as a kid, I don't know anything about it. So for years, Scott Walker was just this name I knew. But one day I was rooting around for something to listen to and I thought I'd check it out. It was this crazy Burt Bacharach shit. So I go deeper, and I learn about all the different eras of his life, including the period in the Walker Brothers where they made the *Nite Flights* album in the mid-seventies. That was kind of like their equivalent of Bowie's Berlin period – this dark, weird thing that's a world away from *The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore*. It was mind-blowing.



MAIN: GETTY; NATE MENDELL: DANNY CLINCH



The Walker Brothers at the peak of their success, in '66: (l-r) Gary Walker (Gary Leeds), Scott Walker (Scott Engel), John Walker (John Maus).



his proficiency on bass led to steady session work and a regular spot in the instrumental surf combo The Routers. One local gig in 1962, at Pandora's Box, brought him into contact with John Maus, another former child actor, who was then singer-guitarist in a duo with his sister Judy. After a couple of false starts, by 1964 Maus and Engel were playing regularly as the Walker Brothers Trio (the adoption of the ubiquitous 'Walker' was John's idea), alongside drummer Al 'Tiny' Schneider.

A residency at Gazzarri's, a happening nightclub on LA's Sunset Strip, opened doors. They appeared on the TV show *Shindig!* and, having dropped the 'Trio' bit, secured a deal with Mercury Records. Under the guidance of arranger Jack Nitzsche, best known for his 'Wall Of Sound' collaborations with legendary producer Phil Spector, in January 1965 the Walker Brothers laid down their blueprint with their second single, *Love Her*, a Brill Building ballad driven by Scott's sensuous baritone.

"It'd make a great tragedy, the Walker Brothers story. It beats *Hamlet*."

Scott Walker

By this time, Maus and Engel had already befriended Gary Leeds, ex-drummer with The Standells. Leeds had recently been touring the UK with British singer PJ Proby, a stint that convinced him that the Walker Brothers' sound and long-haired image was better suited to the British market. A Europhile at heart, Engel didn't need much persuading.

"Gary said we could do really well there," he recalled. "I wanted to get out of America anyway and go to Europe, because I'd always been a European film freak. I wanted to see if I could meet Ingmar Bergman and a few other people."

With Schneider bowing out, the Walker Brothers secured a $10,000 loan from Leeds's father and flew into London that February. It was good timing. The Righteous Brothers were then top of the charts with *You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling*, a song from the same songwriting stable – Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil – as *Love Her*. The Walker Brothers signed a deal with Philips Records, an affiliate of Mercury, and soon found themselves on tour with The Yardbirds.

UK audiences took to the Walker Brothers immediately. An appearance on weekly pop show *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, recorded at ABC Television studios in Birmingham, was their introduction to fan delirium. "Suddenly they hit us and damn near tore us apart," Scott recalled of trying to enter the studio. "I got inside and I was shocked and bleeding… 'Jesus Christ!' was all I could say."

Success was equally swift. In the wake of the Righteous Brother's success, the Walkers' version of *Love Her* cracked the UK Top 20 in the early summer of '65. John Walker suggested reviving Bacharach and David's break-up ballad *Make It Easy On Yourself*, previously a US hit for Jerry Butler, as a follow-up.

For the recording of that song producer Johnny Franz brought in a full orchestra, with Ivor Raymonde creating a lavish arrangement. It was perfect for Scott, whose sonorous delivery mined the acute agonies of separation in a way that few others could match. "That one really established the formula," Gary explained to interviewer Mark Paytress years later. "From then on we'd find these big, beautiful, romantic songs that made everyone cry."

Make It Easy On Yourself rose to the top of the UK singles chart that September, dislodging the Rolling Stones' *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction*. It went on to sell more than a million copies worldwide, making superstars of the Walker Brothers, especially lead singer Scott. A hit album, *Take It Easy With The Walker Brothers*, kept the momentum going. As did another flawless melodrama, standalone single, *My Ship Is Coming In*.

By the time Walkermania peaked in March 1966, with their huge-production take on Bob Gaudio and Bob Crewe's *The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore*, Scott Walker was struggling to cope with it all. Essentially a prisoner in his own house, with gangs of teenage girls outside, he drew the curtains and retreated into his own inner space.

"He didn't like being famous," Gary observed. "And the more famous he got, the more he hid away. And the more he hid away, the more people wanted to see him."

Scott took to wandering the streets alone at night, the only time he was able to slip out unnoticed. For someone who defined himself as an existentialist – "A person who needs no other people, a world in himself," he told the *NME* – being a pop star was painful.

He sought refuge in the studio, spending hours honing his vocals, take after take. His meticulousness extended to the arrangements and overall sound, becoming more and more involved in the technical process. And the business of songwriting.

A second Walker Brothers album, *Portrait*, was released in August. That same month, reports in the music press stated that Scott had been found unconscious in his flat, necessitating a stay in a Paddington hospital to have his stomach pumped. He refused to discuss it afterwards, even with his bandmates. In November '66 he snuck off to Quarr Abbey, a monastery on the Isle of Wight, to study Gregorian chant. Alas, he had to leave early when fans discovered the place.

There was a small handful of further hits, but the Walker Brothers had started to feud between themselves. They undertook a final tour in April '67 (topping an odd-mix bill that also included Cat

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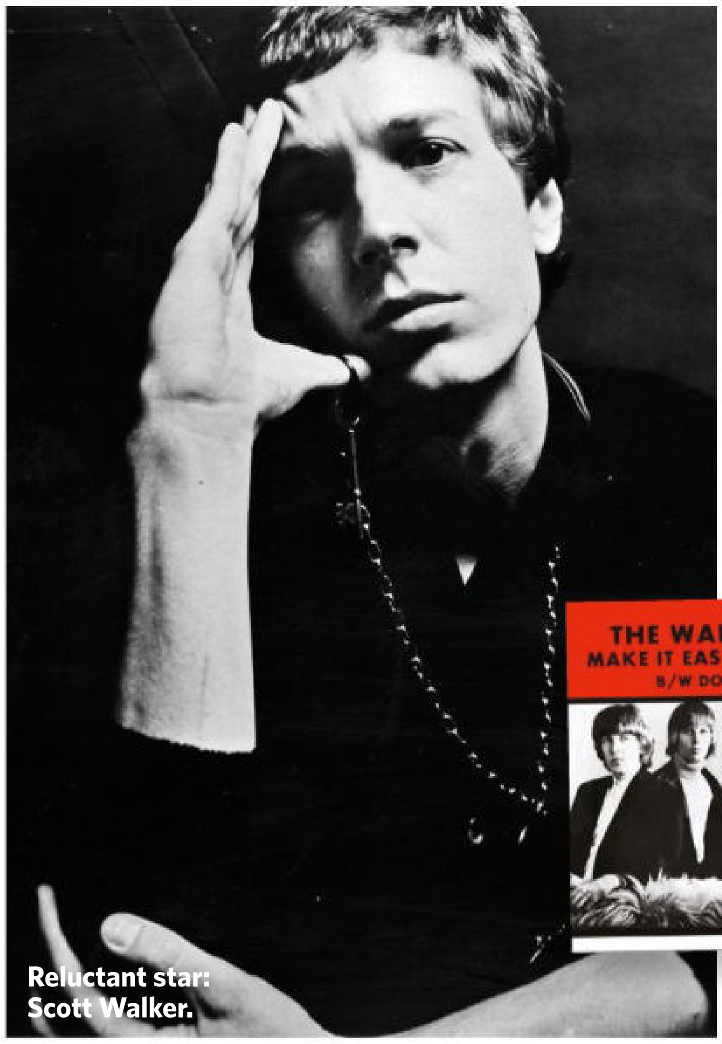


Reluctant star: Scott Walker.

Stevens, Engelbert Humperdinck and the Jimi Hendrix Experience), bowing out with the show at Tooting Granada. Contractually tied to another album, they recorded *Images*, which consisted mostly of uninspired covers.

"For the first time in some years I feel free," a relieved Scott told the *NME*. "There are no longer two other guys on my back to take into consideration. I'm going to do what I want to do."

He duly threw himself into a solo career, as did John and Gary, the latter fronting The Rain.

They may well have continued in that vein, had Scott not lost his way in the early 70s, releasing a series of poorly received albums. "I think I did temporarily go crazy, because I don't remember the period at all very well," he admitted to *The Guardian* decades later.

He was therefore highly receptive to an out-of-the-blue phone call from John, suggesting a Walker Brothers reunion, in late 1974.

It started well enough. The three of them were all suntans and smiles on the sleeve of the resulting *No Regrets*. And while that comeback album was patchy, there was no denying the emotional weight of its extraordinary title track, a Tom Rush cover made lush by a stately arrangement and Scott's devastating voice. Released as a single, it breezed into the UK Top 10 in early 1976.

Sadly, that was as good as it got. Their next album, *Lines*, a largely flaccid set of covers, failed to even make it into the UK chart. "I was left wondering what had happened to that natural Walker Brothers feeling," rued a disconsolate John.

There would be one last hurrah from the Walker Brothers. Released in July 1978, *Nite Flights* defied all preconceptions. Out went the ploddy covers, in came a bunch of daring originals that bore little relation to what had gone before. Scott's four contributions in particular were extraordinary, aligning themselves to Bowie's recent adventures in sound on his albums *Low* and *"Heroes"*: squally sax, icy synthesisers, industrial guitar, free-form lyrics. The real jewel was mini-epic *The Electrician*, a forbidding ambient piece ruptured by strings and flamenco guitar.

Nite Flights might have bombed commercially (another album that didn't even make the charts), but it served to reignite Scott's ambitions as a solo artist. After an ill-starred cabaret tour, during which John claimed Scott had lost interest completely, the Walker Brothers split. John returned home to America, Gary started a business "making reproductions of famous castles out of sand", and Scott signed a solo deal with Virgin. For Scott, it was the beginning of a fascinating, if sporadic, journey into deep abstraction.

Any faint hopes of a Walker Brothers reunion were quashed by John's death in 2011. Scott passed away eight years later. By then, though, the Walker Brothers had long passed into legend. "Those of us who lived through that time know that it was unique in history," John once said, reflecting on the band's meteoric rise during the height of Swinging Sixties pop culture. "I was lucky enough to be in the middle of that phenomenon."

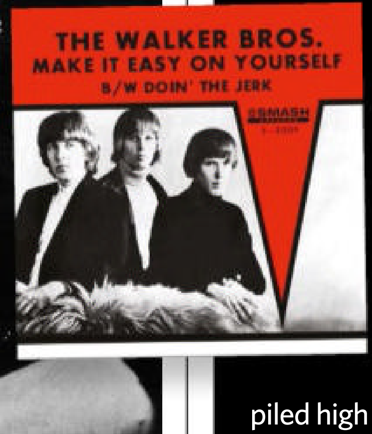
Oh Brother!

Ten essential Walker Brothers tracks.

LOVE HER

(Single, 1965)

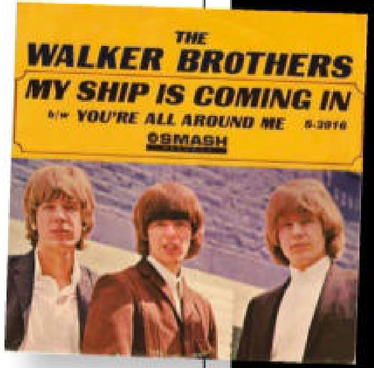
Overseen by Beach Boys producer Nick Venet and legendary arranger Jack Nitzsche, Scott Walker makes his debut as the group's lead singer, surrounded by a Spector-ish Wall Of Sound, on this song previously recorded by the Everly Brothers. The single broke the Walker Brothers in the UK.



MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF

(Take It Easy With The Walker Brothers, 1965)

Their first British chart-topper was a majestic version of this Burt Bacharach-Hal David song. It's a quintessential break-up ballad, piled high with orchestral melodrama and showcasing Scott Walker's intense baritone.



MY SHIP IS COMING IN

(Single, 1965)

Written by Joey Brooks and initially recorded by American soul singer Jimmy Radcliffe. The Walkers strike a rare note of optimism in a sea of heartache. Scott soars in triumphant fashion, convinced that *'things are gonna be different now, little baby'*.

THE SUN AIN'T GONNA SHINE ANYMORE

(Single, 1966)

An undeniable classic that enshrined the Walker Brothers as lords of symphonic sorrow. Songwriters Bob Crewe and Bob Gaudio might have written it especially for Scott, with its opening: *'Loneliness is a cloak you wear/A deep shade of blue is always there.'*

DEADLIER THAN THE MALE

(Single, 1966)

The title song of the British spy caper (centred on fictional hero Bulldog Drummond) was co-written by Scott Walker and producer Johnny Franz. With its allusions to the Kipling poem *The Female Of The Species*, he conjures a portrait of deceit and betrayal.

ARCHANGEL

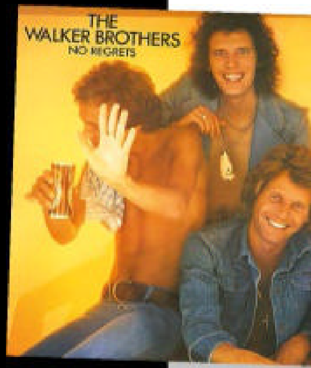
(B-Side, 1966)

Inexplicably relegated to the B-side of *Deadlier Than The Male*, this Scott-composed brooding gem points the way to his early solo career. The lyrics are an existentialist's dream: *'I stand here watching the dying of an ageless day.'*

I CAN'T LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU

(Images, 1967)

A sensitive acoustic ballad with spare percussion and a muted brass solo, it's arguably John Walker's finest moment with the trio. Echoing the imminent demise of the Walker Brothers themselves, his folk-soul voice traces someone who's lost their way.



NO REGRETS

(No Regrets, 1975)

The definitive version of Tom Rush's folk tune finds co-producer Scott Walker in lugubriously stoic mood, reconciled to living alone after a painful separation. Played out over nearly six minutes, the arrangement is a master class in restraint.

NITE FLIGHTS

(Nite Flights, 1978)

The Walker Brothers go avant-rock. Offering his first original material since 1970, Scott's left-field treasure took a leaf from David Bowie's recent work on *"Heroes"*. Bowie, long an admirer, later covered the song on his 1993 album *Black Tie White Noise*.

THE ELECTRICIAN

(Nite Flights, 1978)

Longtime fans might have been left thoroughly puzzled by it, but this experimental centrepiece of *Nite Flights* – all ambient pulses, strings and weird atmospheres – would set the tone for the second phase of Scott Walker's anything-goes solo career.

ALMOST FAMOUS

To those in the know, **Happy Chichester** is one of the most underrated songwriters of his generation, and he almost joined the Foos. We tracked down the cult hero from Columbus, Ohio.

Words: **Henry Yates**

If the walls of Ohio's most disreputable rock clubs could talk, they'd tell the legend of Happy Chichester. Going by the numbers, The Black Keys might be the Midwest state's favourite sons. But Chichester is its most intriguing riddle. To those that know – a circle of trust chaired by Dave Grohl – the man with the eyepatch is a peerless master of melody, a genius multi-instrumentalist and mulcher of genres, responsible for much of modern rock's sunken treasure.

It doesn't hurt his mythology, either, that Chichester has never played ball with the music business. Heading into the millennium, this is the man who bought himself out of his Columbia Records contract, and never quite seized an invitation to play guitar for the Foo Fighters. Now independent, operating without a press officer or a proper website, we finally track down this cultest of heroes on Twitter, for an interview granted at the eleventh hour. "I'm just not that interested," admits Chichester over Zoom, "in promoting my music."

Even putting aside the mutual artistic respect, you can see why he would click with Grohl. Beaming beneath a beanie and waving his hands to illustrate his war stories, Chichester is a livewire conversationalist who shares much of the Foo-in-chief's Tiggerish energy. Christened Harold – and credited as such on his three-plus-decade songbook – the nickname 'Happy' was bestowed at birth, and suits him better. How could he be otherwise, he asks, when a typical day sees him tinkering on solo passion projects at his home studio, with the cream of Ohio's musician class dropping by for cameos?

"We have this really rich music scene here in Ohio. Y'know, I have friends who played with Miles Davis and Bootsy Collins, or toured the world with Dr. John. Here in Columbus, you'll find yourself sitting next to the guy who spent ten years playing bass with Ray Charles. It all gets blended together. I sometimes feel like Ohio is the only place where my music makes sense. It's too eclectic and far-flung for the rest of the world. James Brown, Led Zeppelin and The Meters are all equally important in the way I hear music."

Case in point is Chichester's first serious band, Royal Crescent Mob, which he describes today as "a non-stop dancing funk-rock machine". Having accidentally mastered most instruments as a kid ("My dad wasn't very tolerant of noise, so I'd get fifteen minutes on the drums, then get run off the kit, fifteen minutes on piano, get run off that…"), Chichester quit college to play bass, but also wrote most of the Mob's best songs, including the Grohl-endorsed *Corporation Enema* and *Going To The Hospital*.

> **"I'm just not that interested in promoting my music."**

"We had a political edge," he remembers. "*Corporation Enema* was this Reagan-era story I'd read in the paper about General Motors in Detroit. These executives had worked there all their lives, and two months before their retirement, the corporation knocked their legs out from underneath them and they weren't able to get their pensions. I wrote *Going To The Hospital* after coming home from fourteen months of non-stop touring, and getting so sick I thought I was gonna die. It turned out I had strepto and mono, at the same time. My throat closed up. I couldn't speak for a week. But I wrote that song."

At their late-eighties peak, Royal Crescent Mob were signed to Warners offshoot Sire, and released the classic *Spin The World* album. But it was the live show that kicked hardest, says Chichester. "There was a club in Columbus called Bernie's where we started out, and at the end of our shows, the venue would just be destroyed. I remember another ▷

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY DAVE GROHL

Back in 1990, I worked at Tower Records in Washington D.C., it may have been before that. In 1987 I was dating a girl that had a Royal Crescent Mob record.

Royal Crescent Mob were from Ohio. The album was kind of like this fun, up-tempo rock-funk type of album. Very light-hearted and fun. She was really into it, we listened to it all the time: *Omerta*.

While I was working at Tower Records, their next record came out, it was called *Spin The World*. I bought the album after work one day, brought it home, and there were a couple of songs on that record that are two of the most beautiful songs I have ever heard in my life. One is called *Going To The Hospital*, the other is called *Corporation Enema*. The melodies and the voice… so Harold, everyone calls him Happy. Happy was the bass player, but Happy is a phenomenal all-round musician – he plays the drums, he plays the bass, he plays the piano, he sings, he plays guitar.

I went to see them play at the 9.30 Club in Washington D.C., and when he got up and sang those songs, I'm not kidding it was almost like hearing Stevie Wonder in a small club. It fucking blew my mind. At the time, in the punk rock scene, that was just miles above any of the other musicians in any of the other bands. But those two songs on that record, I swear are two of the most beautiful songs I've ever heard in my entire life.

So Royal Crescent Mob breaks up, he starts another band called Howlin' Maggie, where he plays guitar and sings. They had another song called *Alcohol*, which came out in maybe 1995. Fucking phenomenal, another amazing song. His voice is just so soulful and fucking beautiful.

We knew each other back then, and then I didn't hear from him in a long time, then were connected in the last couple of years.

One of his newer songs, which is called *A Man Needs An Airplane*, just listen to that song and tell me that he's not… it's like it could be Gerry Rafferty… there's just something about his sense of melody that's advanced.

He almost joined the Foo Fighters in 1999 when we were looking for a guitar player. We were asked to play at the disastrous Woodstock in 1999, and we had just finished making our third record, and Chris Shiflett hadn't joined the band then.

I'm, like, Fuck, I'm gonna call Happy. He's more than able to play any of these songs. But it didn't really work out.

MAIN: ED SPINELLI; DAVE GROHL: DANNY CLINCH

Roland

Don't worry, be Happy Chichester! Live in New York City, 2018.

venue in Madison, Wisconsin, called O'Cayz Corral. Four songs into our set, they had to evacuate the building, because the floor was collapsing from people dancing."

The horrors of the circuit, says Chichester, were all part of the fun. "Apparently, Dave Grohl and his sister used to watch us at the old 9.30 Club in Washington D.C. You'd load in the back, opposite the stage door of Ford's Theatre where Abraham Lincoln was shot – and the rats were the size of cats! One time, our drummer Carlton [Smith] and I were driving around D.C. at two in the morning. We stopped at a red light, and all these hookers are coming up to the van, and Carlton's like, 'We're not interested in what you're selling, but we're looking for a place to eat'. We went to this crazy place that was like a glorified deep fryer, serving crackheads in the middle of the night. And while we were in there, greasin' out, somebody stole all the gear. So we're rolling through the alleys of D.C. and we actually found our stuff – and stole it back. We had some amazing times out there. I feel lucky to still be alive."

Chichester is still stopped on the street by strangers telling him what Royal Crescent Mob meant to them. But his happy-go-lucky tales of that period aren't quite the full picture. "I definitely had my dark encounters with alcohol. It's not to be trifled with. It's the heaviest drug you'll ever do. I mean, I got kicked out of Paisley Park for being blackout-drunk at a Prince party."

Not by Prince himself, surely?

"No, but I blew my opportunity to actually meet and jam with him. We were on tour with Living Colour and I was in such a dark phase. We had just recorded *Spin The World*, and I don't know why, but sometimes at the end of a project, I go into this phase I call 'the trough'. I have to find something new to occupy my creative energies, otherwise I fall into a void of real dark stuff."

The Sire deal didn't last, and Chichester grew frustrated at having no outlet for his growing stockpile of unused songs. He left the Mob amicably in the early-nineties, and the lineup remain friends. "When the election was called here in the States, the guys were all texting together. We were all totally relieved by the result, because none of us are big fans of fascism."

The backstory behind the name of Chichester's next project, Howlin' Maggie, takes some beating. "My grandfather was shot by my grandmother, who was called Maggie, during their dark days of alcohol consumption," he explains. "He survived – and so did their marriage."

"Four songs into our set, they had to evacuate the building, because the floor was collapsing from people dancing."

Adapting his talents to this new band, Chichester proved he could outwrite most of the alt.rock scene, while moving into a frontman role that gave full rein to his sublime, slightly Jeff Buckley-esque vocal. The pick of the catalogue is probably the fabulous *Alcohol*, from 1996's debut album *Honeysuckle Strange*. But music aside, leading a band was harder than it looked. "It wasn't too drastic a change for me to be at the front, singing and playing guitar. But having to get all the guys in the van at ten every morning to get to the next city – all that stuff was difficult for me. Because at the start, I was managing the band as well, and that wasn't my forté, really."

He might have had an easier life, we suggest, if he'd taken up Grohl's offer to join the Foo Fighters in 1999. Chichester recalls the conversation. "Dave called me and asked about playing at Woodstock. I was eager to help and be involved. He had a studio set up in his house, and asked if I wanted to come visit. He sent me a CD of material, and I was ready to go, but then I didn't hear back, and then I guess some things had changed."

Any idea what happened? "Dave is just such a super-good-hearted person. I think what he heard on his end was that I was still finishing the second Howlin' Maggie album. And probably, Dave was not wanting to be a home-wrecker, like, coming in and cannibalising the band. So he let it go, and I kept working on that album."

No regrets, then? "No, not really. Y'know, I don't know if I would have been a great fit for the Foo Fighters. Somebody like Chris Shiflett is just an ace guitar player, and I don't really consider myself that great of a musician. But it's kind of amazing that Dave Grohl asked me to join the Foo Fighters."

Howlin' Maggie got that second album – 2001's *Hyde* – over the line. But by then Chichester had grown itchy again, buying himself out of his Columbia deal and self-releasing *Hyde* on the PopFly label founded by his wife, Laura. "The decision to leave Columbia was the easy part," he shrugs. "I'd already been on a major label once, and I'd had a second album come out and been ignored, and you get the word midway through your tour that you're being dropped. Y'know, I'd already been through that [with Royal Crescent Mob].

"This was at the beginning of the digital distribution world of music, where it was supposed to be this great level playing field. I thought the days of the big-label deal were done. So I got off the label, put my studio together and have just continued like that ever since. It was the beginning of iTunes, when they sold songs for ninety-nine cents, and the artist got sixty-seven cents. If we still had that today, artists would still be empowered, y'know?"

It didn't quite work out that way, of course. But by diving into a solo career that runs under his own steam, this eternal square peg has achieved the artistic carte blanche that he values over any sell-out stadium. It's left him free to release solo cuts as beautiful and diverse as alt.funk floor-filler *Sanctify*, or Grohl's pick *A Man Needs An Airplane* – and two fingers to the commercial consequences.

"I hope people like my solo work," he considers. "But have you seen the new Frank Zappa documentary? They're asking him, 'Why do you go to such expense and trouble to put an orchestra together to perform your compositions'. And he says, 'Because I just want to hear it. And if other people want to hear it too, that's great.'"

There is new material taking shape, he says, although it doesn't yet have anything as conformist as an album title or a release date. In the meantime, Happy Chichester is living up the billing. "To be honest with you, yeah, I'm a very happy person," he smiles. "And I don't know if that's because it's my name, or because I've had the incredible good fortune of being able to record and write my music. But being happy, yeah, it's my natural state. And as long as I get to hit my drums and play music for few hours every day, it's pretty easy to stay happy."

Get Happy's latest song from: happychichester.bandcamp.com/track/history-2020-digital-single

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POLICE
TAMA

DON'T MESS WITH THE MAGIC

How **The Police** battled a tight deadline, rid themselves of label interference and made the album that turned them into international superstars: *Zenyatta Mondatta*.

Words: **Michael Molenda**

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Back in the so-called glory years of the record industry, label executives often seemed to be some bizarre personality fusion of Stalin and Santa Claus. Recording artists would often see the benevolent side of pats on the backs, manipulative but encouraging verbal cheerleading ("We're gonna make you a star, kid!"), and a promotional machine that appeared to have love for their albums alone. Of course, if an artist ever had the gumption to request an audit of their royalty account, these smiling faces would transform into fiery demons looking to obliterate their career with a scorched-earth intensity. These very same execs also loved to embrace almost superstitious truisms about "things that need to happen to create a hit act or identify a dog".

One of these prophetic markers was the all-important third album. To understand this concept, you need to shift your consciousness back a few decades to an era when major labels actually invested in talent and sought to groom artists for success. Typically, a record label would "carry" a band's losses through albums one and two, but if they didn't score significant chart and/or sales action with album three then they might be cut loose from the corporate umbilical cord, often never to be heard from again.

For The Police, that line in the sand was their 1980 album *Zenyatta Mondatta.*

"It was a crazy and bizarre time," guitarist Andy Summers remembers. "We had some good hits off of our first two albums, and we were doing well in the States, but we hadn't broken wide open there yet. You can't believe how much pressure there was for us to make it in America. 'Gotta make it in America. Gotta make it in America. Gotta make it in America.' This was yelled at us like a mantra by our manager. So *Zenyatta* was perceived as the possible breakthrough album."

You'd think their label would have moved heaven and earth to ensure The Police had the time, support and resources to deliver a worldwide smash. That didn't happen.

In reality, the mountain of importance being placed on the third album wasn't exactly mirrored by long and studious preproduction and songwriting phases, or a creatively nurturing recording plan. Not that Summers, bassist/vocalist Sting and drummer Stewart Copeland were accustomed to any inflated 70s-style rock-star treatment. The band's first album, 1978's *Outlandos d'Amour,* basically had a recording budget of near zero, which forced the band to grab cheap time at Surrey Sound whenever it was convenient for the studio.

"We were desperate and struggling during that first album," Summers says. "For the most part, we would record on Sunday afternoons, when we could go in for free. We pieced the album together, recording in two-hour increments, once a week, for more than six months. But one good thing about that is we were able to improve the album as we went along. We'd listen to the songs repeatedly, and we'd abandon any tracks that we felt weren't good enough."

Reportedly, the recording costs reached a massively stingy level of just £2,000 – an incredible investment-versus-return proposition, as *Outlandos* produced three hit singles: *Roxanne, Can't Stand Losing You* and *So Lonely.* To be fair, A&M Records did see potential before The Police were set to record their second album, 1979's *Reggatta de Blanc.* But they approached this opportunity by doing what record companies tended to do at the time, which was try to compel the musicians to record in a large, expensive studio with a big-name producer. The Police were having none of that.

Instead they went back to Surrey Sound, managed to schedule four weeks of recording over several months, and kept the expenses down to a still very miserly studio budget of between £6,000 and £9,000. Despite a lack of new songs at the ready when actual recording started, *Reggatta de Blanc* delivered four hit singles: *Message In A Bottle* (bearing one of the hippest guitar intros ever), *Walking On The Moon, Bring On The Night* and *The Bed's Too Big Without You.*

It seems laughable that a band would have to approach a third album as a 'make or break' situation after they'd clocked seven international hits, but that's exactly what The Police were facing during the summer of 1980. Their chances of success were helped, perhaps, by a recording budget that inflated to £35,000, thanks to the efforts of co-producer Nigel Gray. But three potential storms – all caused by the band's expanding fortunes – put a giant dent into even this benefit.

"We never thought: 'How can we make a hit?' All we had to do was be The Police."

Andy Summers

Firstly, Summers, Sting and Copeland had to get out of town. The comfort of recording once again at Surrey Sound, their home base for *Outlandos d'Amour* and *Reggatta de Blanc,* was denied because they could not work at a studio in England for tax reasons. Instead they became tax exiles at Wisseloord Studios in the Netherlands.

Secondly, non-stop tour commitments would leave The Police with just four weeks to record and mix the album before they would have to leave for yet another round of concert appearances. Thirdly, the band wouldn't even get four undisturbed weeks, because they were booked to perform at festivals back in England and Ireland right in the middle of their studio sessions.

This is the story of three creative musicians with their backs against the wall so many times that even the most impulsive gambler in a film-noir thriller wouldn't bet on a happy ending for them. And yet, The Police made their breakthrough album and became a huge musical force. Hard work pays off. Talent wins out. Miracles do happen. The gambler should have placed that bet.

Andy Summers picks up the tale…

The Police got together during that boiling cauldron of the punk-rock movement in London. What was that like for you, Sting and Stewart Copeland?

It was like this: you had to be punk or you couldn't even think about getting a gig. You'd never get one, because the punk scene pretty much ruled everything in London. There was a sort of religious fervor about it, and it was a bad moment if you were offering something other than raw anguish, let's say. It was like a great recession of music. It was horrifying. Record companies were signing any old shit as fast as they could if they thought it was punk, and corporate-rock bands were changing their vibe and appearance almost overnight. Everything was out, except punk, and that was freaking everyone out. It was like some great lemming suicide rush to be in style.

Before I joined the band, Stewart was desperately trying to write something that was fast and furious. I'm sure Sting made some contributions in that regard as well, but the timing wasn't right for Sting to truly emerge as a songwriter in the punk era. Before, after and during the early years of my being in the group, everyone involved was locked into just sustaining the band's life, basically, by having the appearance of a punk band. It was all very dodgy, and it didn't really work. We weren't real punks, as it were, we were kind of fake. We could play fast and furious, but, yeah, we were suspect. We were sort of too good to be included in the scene.

You've said that *Zenyatta Mondatta* was a critically important album, and then these time and travel impediments dropped into your lap. Did those pressures affect everyone's temperament and creativity, or did you take it in stride and get to work?

It was all pretty fraught, actually. By the time we got to *Zenyatta,* we were working twenty-four/seven. Then we were shipped off to this place to make the record, and we really didn't know what we were going to do, unless, of course, Sting had some songs up his sleeve.

There was definitely outside pressure to make an enormously successful album, but that didn't bother us much. We were like: "They want hits. What are they talking about? Almost everything we do is a hit" [laughs]. Once we started recording, the sessions were going well, but in the third week – in the heat of making the album – we were taken out of the studio for a week to do these stupid festivals.

Did you wonder: "So how important is this album for our career if they're pulling us out of the studio to play some gigs?"

Sure. Of course. But the truth was, as a band we were so into recording the album. We were still riding that early rush of big success. We were ferociously playing all the time. Seven nights

GETTY

"You're standing too close to me!" The Police in the Netherlands, 1983.

a week. We were completely together, super-tight and really into our thing. We weren't messing about. We knew how to make any song sound like The Police. We had it down by *Zenyatta*, and we could make a great record really fast. We'd proven that before.

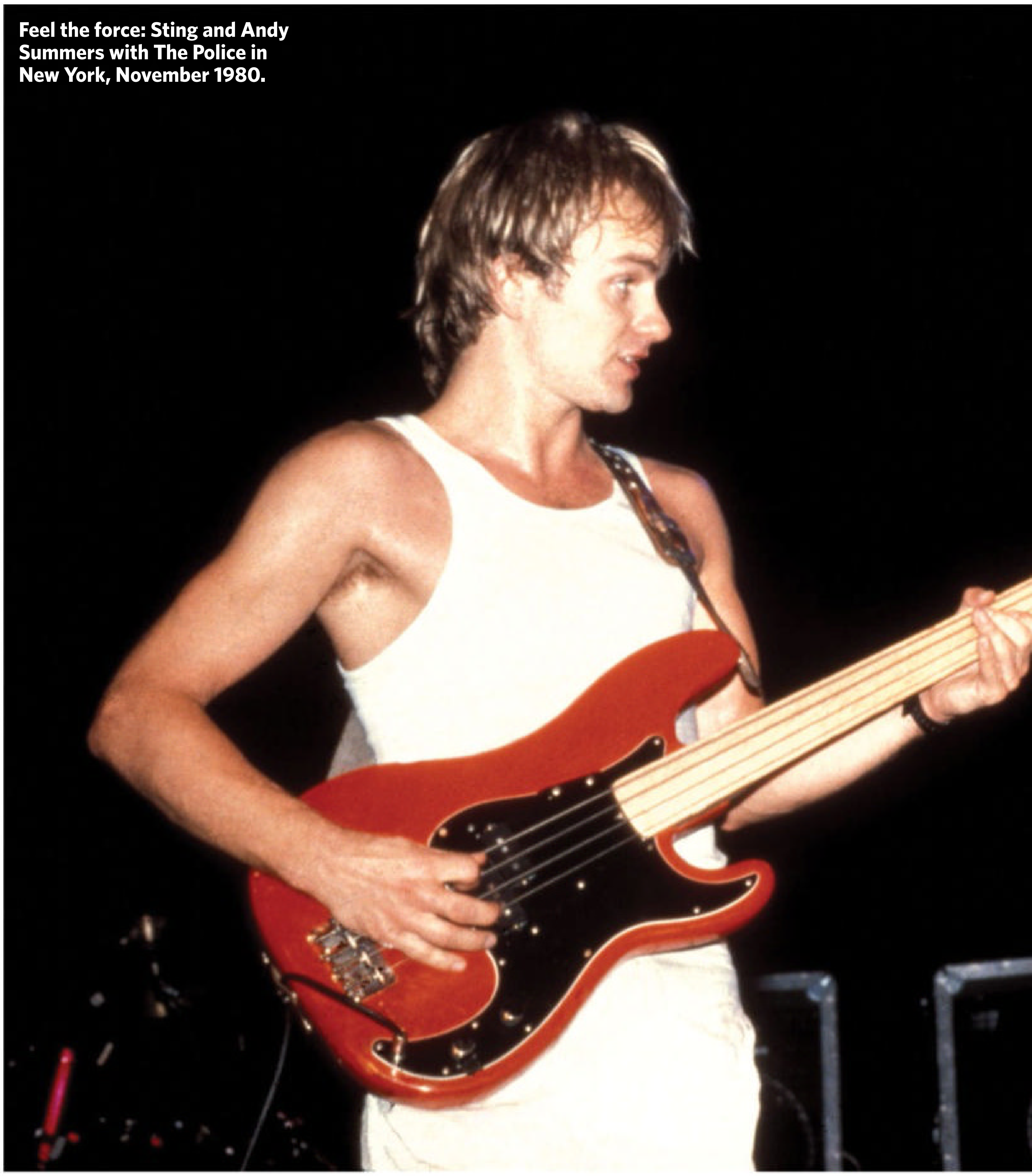
Back in those days, however, whenever an album was viewed as a potential hit, the record company's A&R people often jumped into the mix. There would be all these suggestions for the artists, such as: "There's a Number-One song right now that has a backwards acoustic guitar sound, and we really need that on your record." How much label interference did you have to deal with?
Well, none. I was very jealous about making my parts sound like me. I wasn't ready to be instructed [laughs]. The record companies always wanted you to sound like something else that had been a hit. I think that has been the way it is since the beginning of record labels. In any media – music, movies, whatever – you tend to have squares running the scene.

Let me give you a classic example from the early Police days. The second track we put out was *Can't Stand Losing You*. We did our mix, and we presented it to the record company. But their attitude was: "All right, boys, we'll take it over from here. We'll remix this and make it a hit." Their thought was that we couldn't do that. What did we know? We were just kids. So they took the track to five different engineers and producers, who tried to remix what we had already done. In the end they gave up and admitted: "Your mix is the best." And you know what? They never bothered us again. Ever. They trusted us. The label's attitude after that was: "Don't fuck with the magic."

At least they realised that and backed off.
Yeah. They woke up pretty quickly to have a "Just let them do it" approach. But to put this in greater perspective, it was the peak period of the recording industry, and the executives tended to be very invasive. They wanted control. And at first they couldn't believe these three young kids didn't need to be guided to success. It also probably drove them mad that we were producing our records. But, miraculously, they realised they shouldn't mess with this magical little band that was having hit after hit all over the world. That was almost unheard of at the time.

How did the three of you work on the *Zenyatta* tracks?
Obviously, Sting is the main songwriter. But what makes these tracks what they are is the way the three of us play together – the sound of the band. It's another one of those classic music-making things, really.

A guy has a song, and what you end up with doesn't sound remotely like what you started with. Yes, the songwriter is well represented, but with a good band you also have the chemistry of the guys who made the thing. I think what makes Police music so unique – and what makes it still hold up today – is that each of us was very aggressive about how his part would go. All Police tracks are the products of tight compromise, because we were very intense about searching for a different sound. In fact, if we had any political stance, it was not to sound like anyone else.


Feel the force: Sting and Andy Summers with The Police in New York, November 1980.

But you were also a band that produced a lot of hit songs. Did any commercial pop strategies enter into the making of Police records?
The whole thing is kind of miraculous, because we never thought: "How can we make a hit?" All we had to do was be The Police.

When Sting showed you and Stewart his songs for *Zenyatta*, and you two added your own parts, did he ever say something like: "Hey, that wasn't how I envisioned this song. Why are you messing with it?"
No, no. He would get it immediately. He'd say: "Now it's sounding like something." He was fine with providing the bones and letting Stewart and I help put some flesh on it and build it into a body. It's like taking a sketch and bringing all the colour and brushwork to it. You add all these other elements, and the song becomes larger-than-life. Which is what we were always looking for. And don't forget, Sting was involved in this whole process as well. He didn't hand the song to us and disappear. He was part of the band chemistry that defined The Police. And because we were always playing together, we almost automatically knew the moves that would make a song sound like our band. We got really good at that.

> **"Each of us was very aggressive about how his part would go. We were very intense about searching for a different sound."**
> **Andy Summers**

Can we play a quick word-association game with some of the songs on *Zenyatta Mondatta*? Could you give me one sentence about *Don't Stand So Close To Me*?
A cute little guitar riff – sort of a rip-off of *Rock And Roll Woman* by Buffalo Springfield.

What about *Driven To Tears*?

CHOSEN BY TAYLOR HAWKINS

They were like the Led Zeppelin of the eighties. They flipped everything on its side, turning the beat upside down, putting reggae and rock together.

I read a book by John Bonham's brother, and he said that Stewart Copeland was the first drummer to come along and scare John Bonham. Not physically, but he was the first guy to make Bonham go: "Oh fuck, there's a new kid in town."

They became very popular and pop, but they didn't make a lot of records. Like the original Jane's Addicton or even The Beatles, they really weren't together that long – they burned quick and bright. There were a lot of emotions within that band, and you can hear it in the music and feel it in the live performance.

There's a strong political message in the lyrics that has held up through the years, and it's a fun song to play.

When The World Is Running Down, You Make The Best of What's Still Around.
I think Sting demonstrated that one to Stewart and I on acoustic guitar. Very simple stuff. When I got hold of it, I played things such as a G11 and an Am11 [chords] through chorus and echo. Then Stewart added his stuff and the song went to a whole other place. It's also a classic example of a trio with three distinct parts working together to create a whole.

Canary In A Coal Mine.
That was a big rhythm part. I remember it was sort of difficult to get down. I don't actually listen to this stuff ever, by the way. Just so you know. I think people assume you sit around and listen to your old records all day long.

Understood. But I am curious about the almost comedic situation around your song *Behind My Camel*. The story goes that Sting hated it, refused to play on it and actually even buried the tape so the track couldn't be completed. Stewart seemed indifferent. It certainly isn't a pop song, but it balances the material on *Zenyatta Mondatta* quite nicely, and it's a brilliantly moody instrumental. Why all the agit over it?
Typical band stuff, I guess. I liked it. I was always much more interested in weirder stuff. And the commercial hit songs always seemed to come out of Sting anyway. But we didn't have enough songs to fill the album, and I had this *Behind My Camel* thing. I said: "How about doing this, then?" And Sting said: "I'm not playing on that!" I actually believe he did bury the tape in the garden [laughs]. Stewart was actually up for working on it, so I just played the bass.

Presumably it was Sting's bass that you used for the track?
Yeah, I'm sure it was.

Did anything in particular inspire the bass line you came up with?
Everything was moving so fast in the studio that I doubt I had time to think about it very much. I probably just got the bass in there with the kick drum.

When the song went on to win the 1982 Grammy Award for Best Rock Instrumental Performance, did you allow yourself a bit of a laugh at Sting's expense?
I loved the irony. I'm sure there was some smug self-satisfaction: "See? I fucking told you!"

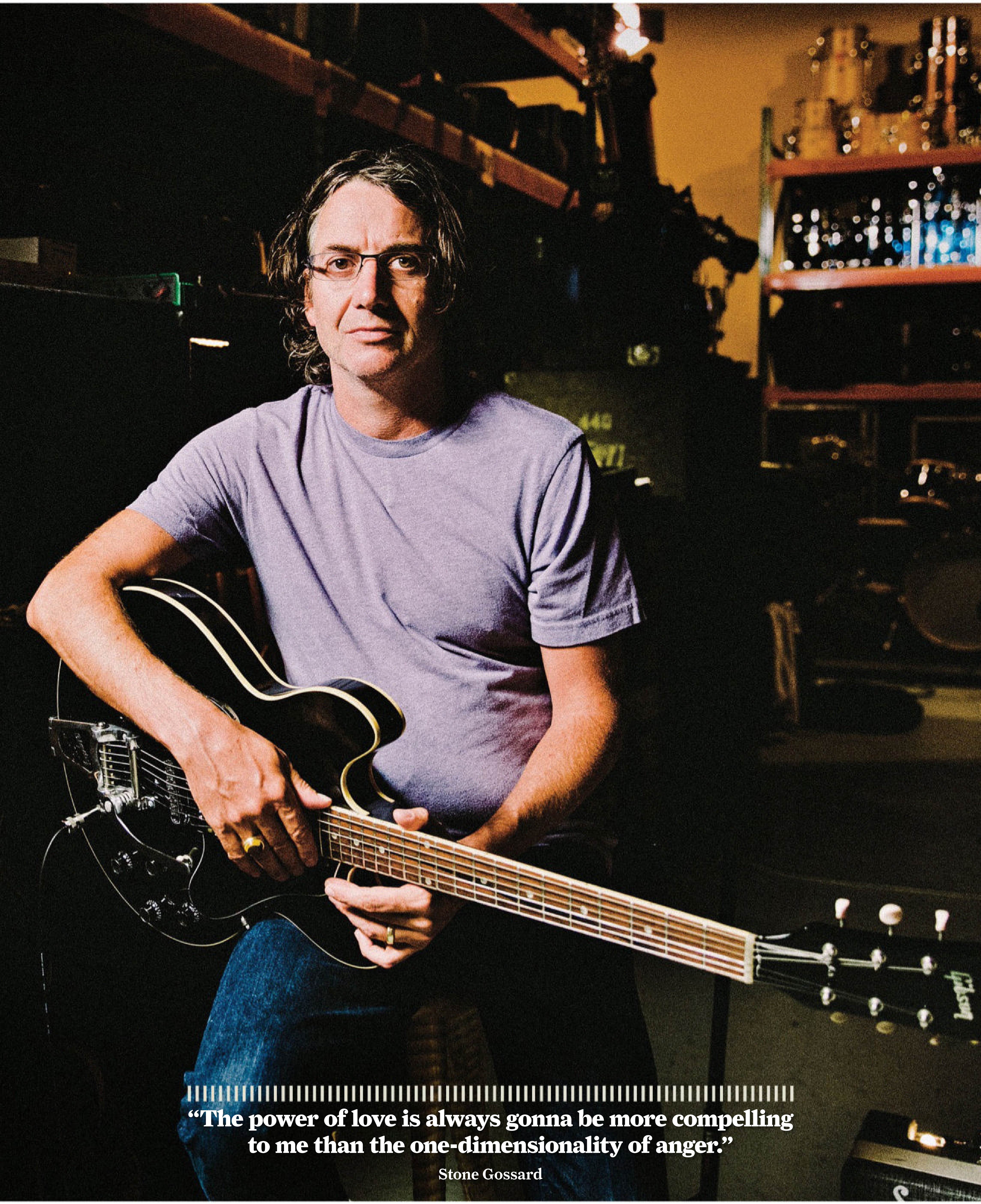
The pop-culture mythology about *Zenyatta Mondatta* is that you, Sting and Stewart didn't really love the album, even though it finally broke The Police big in America and gave you two Top 10 singles: *Don't Stand So Close To Me* and *De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da*. Is this alleged dislike myth, or truth?

> **"In the heat of making the album, we were taken out of the studio for a week to do these stupid festivals."**
> **Andy Summers**

There's some truth to it, sure. I can only speak for myself, but I think *Zenyatta Mondatta* might be remembered more for how everything was so crazy at the time we recorded it. We were becoming the hottest band in the world, and with all the resulting demands and expectations. The studio time being shortened by the festival gigs and having to worry about leaving for a tour certainly didn't help.

For example, we had mixed the entire album before leaving for the festivals, and when we came back to the studio we listened to the mixes all over again, and we thought they were shit. What could we do? We remixed every song on the album in one night. Then we left for the tour early in the morning. I remember as we were leaving, we thought: "Oh well. We've probably blown it." ●

GETTY



"The power of love is always gonna be more compelling to me than the one-dimensionality of anger."

Stone Gossard

Kicks Outta The Jam

Channelling his carefree youth and working with a songwriting partner licking the wounds of divorce, **Stone Gossard** has put together a side project to rival his day job in the mighty Pearl Jam. "This band," he says of Painted Shield, "is some serious assassins."

Words: **Henry Yates**

The man peering into the webcam doesn't look like an over-achiever. The four-day stubble, the slightly bleary eyes behind thick-framed glasses – along with the comfy sofa and the yawning dog… none of these hint at Stone Gossard's career-long habit of spinning plates. "I'm definitely not a workaholic," he says.

The 54-year-old's résumé says otherwise, though. From 90s alt.rock supergroup Temple Of The Dog to perennial cult favourites Brad, via solo albums, a record label and guest spots with half its roster, it has sometimes been hard to tell whether the guitarist's three decades with Pearl Jam is the main event or the rainy-day project. "I write more songs than there's ever gonna be Pearl Jam tracks," he considers. "I've always got piles of demos."

Needless to say, Gossard has a new band. They're called Painted Shield. But if there's a temptation to pay lip service to this umpteenth side project's self-titled debut – before steaming into Pearl Jam's plans for 2021 – then the music makes you stop and look around. Writing with alt.folk vocalist Mason Jennings and ace session drummer Matt Chamberlain – alongside Brittany Davis a regular fixture on keyboards/vocals, and a rotating cast of notables – the tracks on the album aren't what you'd expect from a middle-aged grunge talisman. With Jennings's voice shifting the mood on a sixpence, there's everything from nu goth to wonky Kinks-ish art-school psych about '*a girl with sunshine eyes*'. "It has all these influences that aren't totally obvious," Gossard says, nodding in agreement.

The timing of Painted Shield might suggest a lockdown project – and the album was indeed recorded remotely – but the on/off partnership with Jennings goes back six years, Gossard explains.

"The first thing we did was *Knife Fight*, which was very promising, like Iggy Pop-meets-I don't know what. Then we exchanged more ideas, and those weren't as succinct or powerful. We didn't even talk for maybe a year. In between that, he's having kids and going through a divorce, I'm having kids and doing Pearl Jam stuff. Until two years ago, when we started throwing songs back and forth that were really popping: *Ten Years From Now, On The Level*… We got more serious."

Pearl Jam's latest album, *Gigaton*, was taking shape around the same time.

When you write a song, how do you decide which pile it goes in?

"I try to play Ed [Vedder] everything. But he doesn't really want to hear everything I write, because it's too much. He doesn't work that way. Ed likes to get a riff from you when you bring it in the room, or it feels like it came in the middle of the process. When it's me predicting: 'This is the next great Pearl Jam song', it usually doesn't work. I write them all for Ed, in a sense. But when you have three hundred songs floating around, you can drop a few someplace else."

The songs that Gossard drops on *Painted Shield* are some of his best since Pearl Jam's classic *Ten* debut. Vedder has said Gossard doesn't like to repeat himself creatively, and that's evidenced by everything from *Time Machine*'s industrial grind to *Raven*'s mournful electro-throb. "I'm not really a musician, per se," the guitarist considers. "I never studied, I don't know what I'm doing, for the most part. So my methodology is: 'Well, if I don't know how to do it properly, I should just reinvent the whole wheel.' I'm sure that's frustrating to Eddie sometimes. Y'know, when I've got an idea where we're all on kalimbas and everybody plays one note every sixteen bars…"

Jennings was happy to follow him into the unknown, says Gossard. "Mason is an adventurer. He's made some amazing solo records, but he's also embraced this concept of throwing himself off a cliff in this band, and not knowing what it's going to be, and being excited about not necessarily being in control of it."

The most obvious get-aboard track for browsers is *On The Level*, a jangle-rock singalong that sounds like it's from a different era and continent.

"When I first heard Mason sing over that…" Gossard says, beaming. "He came up with that melody, which is so sing-songy, and the lyric is so self-deprecating, and it's optimistic, but at the same time like: 'I'm totally failing.' It's kinda English in that sense, because he takes the piss out of himself. It also reminded me of Joe Walsh solo stuff from seventy-eight or something, sort of unabashedly rock. That song totally took me back to my youth – like, bad Colombian pot, riding BMXs and not having a care in the world."

While *On The Level* is blissfully lightweight, the album often runs deeper. There are darker moments like *Time Machine*, where Jennings is a snarky drawl within the cogs of a machine, backed by a truly mental solo from Gossard. There's the driving groove of *I Am Your Country* ("It's the concept of a country looking at its people from above"). And the aforementioned *Ten Years From Now*, softened from Jennings's wounded first draft into a glitchy, spooky, Syd Barrett-mannered standout.

"Mason had gone through a pretty tough divorce," Gossard explains. "That song started out angry, a cathartic primal scream. But we came up with the theme of stepping back and trying to imagine a future that is incrementally better. I think the power of love is always gonna be more compelling to me than the one-dimensionality of anger. There's already plenty of that in the world right now."

On this record, Painted Shield might just be Gossard's best ever bit on the side. But there's a troubling question hanging: what if it turns out that there's no chemistry when the band members finally get together in a room? No need to worry, Gossard says, smiling. "I've got no doubt it's gonna rock. Brittany is an incredible singer and player. Matt is just insane. If we ever get to play *I Am Your Country* at a European festival, it's gonna slay people. This band is some serious assassins."

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

Painted Shield's self-titled debut album is out now via Loosegroove.

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P84

Billie Joe Armstrong

Green Day leader releases covers album – and there are some surprises.

THE HARD STUFF

The Ultimate ROCK REVIEWS Section

12 PAGES

100% ROCK

Classic Rock Ratings

- ■■■■■■■■■■ A Classic
- ■■■■■■■■■□ Excellent
- ■■■■■■■■□□ Very Good
- ■■■■■■■□□□ Good
- ■■■■■■□□□□ Above Average
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- ■■□□□□□□□□ Pants
- ■□□□□□□□□□ Pish

Ingredients:

P84 Albums
P90 Reissues
P94 DVDs & Books
P96 Buyer's Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam

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THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

Clutch

Weathermaker Vault Series Volume I

WEATHERMAKER

Album of re-recordings, covers and previously digital-only singles is more than just a stopgap.

There are few modern rock bands guaranteed to get you out of a funk as fast as Clutch can. Their explosive stoner blues boogies are instant mood lifters, and over 29 years and 12 albums the Maryland quartet have honed that sound to be solid in a way that's reliable rather than predictable. They've kept a toe dipped in their psych/punk roots, and even when they polish things up they retain a raw edge that sits nicely with their salt-of-the-earth demeanour – just four normal dudes who happen to play damn fine rock'n'roll. Along the way they've assembled a jumbled crew of fans in hardcore metalheads, blues aficionados and anyone who just loves a good riff. And it isn't uncommon to hear the claim that they've never made a bad album.

To keep fans sated for now until new material comes along in the shape of a new proper album, their label have released *Weathermaker Vault Series Volume I*, a mixture of re-recorded Clutch songs and covers, some that were released as digital-only singles in 2019, now all packaged up together for the first time.

Straight off the bat the energy levels are high and we're reconnecting to Clutch's early punk days with *Passive Restraints*, which first appeared on their second EP in 1992. Big, brawny and flying with furious intensity, this version finds a fitting guest in Randy Blythe of Lamb Of God, whose high-velocity growls keep things heavy. Shawna Potter of fellow Maryland punks War On Women is a more subtle inclusion (although her soaring vocals are anything but), adding backing vocals to the uplifting closer *Willie Nelson*. The rest of the re-recorded tracks serve as a reminder of the strength of Clutch's back catalogue, whether via the spaced-out psych of *Spacegrass* or bluesy fan favourite *Electric Worry*.

The cover songs included also lean towards the bluesier side: there's the stonkingly groovy take on ZZ Top's *Precious And Grace*, a supercharged version of Willie Dixon's Chicago blues classic *Evil (Is Going On)*, and a rollicking cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortunate Son* that's an absolutely perfect fit for Clutch. They also throw in a curve ball with *Algo Ha Cambiado*, a jaunty, trippy cover of a song by Argentinian heavy blues/psych artist Norberto Napolitano, with Neil Fallon singing in Spanish.

While you wait for Clutch's lucky album number 13, this lively compilation will get your spirits up.

Rating: 8/10

Hannah May Kilroy

Hawkwind

50th Anniversary Live

CHERRY RED

Some beautiful heavy psychedelics here.

You know precisely what you're gonna get with Hawkwind's 50th anniversary tour (50 years?!). Like the full-blown, spaced-out grandad precursors of young upstarts King Gizzard and their kind that Hawkwind are, the music on this album is glorious, nonsensical, windblown singalong electrification. You've got gaudy, two-note mud-churner *Silver Machine*, founding member Dave Brock's recent (2019) *Flesh Fondue* stormer and class mystical delight *Spirit Of The Age*. There's plenty of earthy London accents and tracks lifted from the 2019 Top 40 album *All Aboard The Skylark*.

This is the sort of proto-punk/hard rock psychedelic shit that half the bands involved in grunge (Spacemen 3, Mudhoney) were searching for for most of their early careers, to be honest.

Two CDs, triple-gatefold vinyl, you can just tune in, drop whatever shit takes your fancy and bliss out. In places Hawkwind still sound heavier than heavin', and there's even a guest spot or two from Phil Campbell, notably on the ol' Lemmy stalwart *The Watcher*.

Magic.

Rating: 7/10

Everett True

The Dirty Nil

Fuck Art

DINE ALONE

Canadian trio's entirely untopical third album.

It's difficult not to warm to the enthusiasm and humour underpinning these Ontario punks' oeuvre when they admit to having ignored impending global catastrophe to focus on more heartfelt compositions with titles such as *To The Guy Who Stole My Bike* and *Done With Drugs*. Sometimes their blustering Green Day-meets-Replacements style of songwriting makes a distinct impression, on shoutalong, swearalong stompers like *Possession* and *Doom Boy*.

Elsewhere the adrenalised vim of *Ride Or Die* adds a snarling metallic heft and sense of outlaw intent to proceedings. The more abiding feeling we're left with, though, is that high-octane hard pop like this needs just a few more piercing hooks to really raise The Dirty Nil above all the other generic good-time rockers that will give you a fun half-hour in a festival tent but rarely capture your imagination.

Rating: 6/10

Johnny Sharp

Billie Joe Armstrong

No Fun Mondays

WARNER BROS

Green Day leader takes the solo covers route.

Right now, Green Day should be out touring this year's *Father Of All Motherfuckers*, but Billie Joe Armstrong has spent some of his enforced holiday rattling out covers for his band's YouTube channel. And they're gathered together on *No Fun Mondays*, a 21st-century time-buying equivalent of Guns N'Roses's *The Spaghetti Incident?* or Matthew Sweet & Susanna Hoffs's *Under The Covers* albums.

It's hardly *American Idiot*, but it's a cheery diversion nevertheless. Armstrong's choices are either pop-punk – Billy Bragg's *A New England*, the long-lost Starjets' *War Stories*, The Clash's take on Eddy Grant's *Police On My Back* – or all-out pop: The Bangles' *Manic Monday*, Kim Wilde's *Kids In America*, a version of *I Think We're Alone Now* that owes more to The Rubinoos than to Tiffany. Armstrong's approach is to coat each song with *Dookie*-style twang, so while something more adventurous might have been the way forward, the singer and his inspirations remain unscathed.

Rating: 7/10

John Aizlewood

Voivod

Lost Machine

CENTURY MEDIA

Live album that packs a punch.

Anyone who thinks rock fans have grown more conservative over the years should find cheer in the fact that this Quebec crew have thrived on a cult level for 39 years, despite pursuing a wilfully perverse sonic agenda.

This live album captures them at a local festival back in 2019. The wonderful mix somehow manages to tread that razor-thin line between keeping the instruments separated and delivering a powerfully united racket. Denis 'Snake' Belanger generally sounds like he's singing

in a different key to the rest of the band, but that's all part of their gloriously discordant charm. While the set does touch on the band's more obnoxious older material (*Overreaction, Psychic Vacuum, Voivod*), the emphasis is more on their more progressive and often disarmingly melodic gems like *Into The Hypercube* and *Always Moving*. Throw in a cover of Pink Floyd's *Astronomy Domine* and the contents of this beguiling time capsule are complete.

Jason Arnopp

Big Big Train

Empire ENGLISH ELECTRIC

Classy, ambitious prog caught on Blu-ray/two CDs.

It's not long since leading Genesis-influenced Brit proggers Big Big Train's last live album, but this new one taken from their 2019 London Hackney Empire show again captures their laudable desire to build musical moments of majesty. It's also the end of an era, as this was the final gig with the band for former XTC guitarist Dave Gregory, keyboard player Danny Manners and violinist Rachel Hall.

Most recent studio album *The Grand Tour* is the focus, and highlights *Voyager* and *The Florentine* soar, but *Brave Captain* and 17-minute finale *East Coast Racer* are still their two show stoppers. The latter is the pinnacle of 21st-century prog music, no less, and its precise shifts and accumulative power destroy the myth that prog is more cerebral than emotional. Given the chance, it'll have you in floods.

The film is polished, the whole thing is solid, but, oh man, that surge from around the 11-minute mark in *East Coast Racer*...

Chris Roberts

TV Smith

Lockdown Holiday

EASY ACTION

Covid-blues solo album from ex-Adverts singer/songwriter.

Written and recorded over the spring and summer of 2020, *Lockdown Holiday* is an unintended album, conceived in lieu of extensive touring gigs with Stiff Little Fingers and Die Toten Hosen. These are unvarnished songs, hammered out and to the point, presented here in the order in which they were written, as Smith goes through the various phases of response to lockdown.

Opener *The Lucky Ones* is philosophical about the situation, but songs like *Send In The Clown* express bitterness about the government's woeful handling of the pandemic; *Let's Get Back To The Good Old Days* shows a certain raw desperation kicking in, while *Going Nowhere Fast* is laden with the despair commonly felt in those dark autumn weeks before news of the vaccine.

It's perhaps a shame that Smith finished *Lockdown Holiday* before those hopeful tidings broke. Still, for fans deprived of seeing him play in 2020 the album is a consolation.

David Stubbs

Hearts & Hand Grenades

Turning to Ashes ECLIPSE

Solid debut that's a bit more heart than hand grenade.

Having taken a major step up career-wise after impressing Goo Goo Dolls vocalist/bassist Robby Takac enough to get some valuable recording time at his studio, Hearts & Hand Grenades have finally progressed from EPs to this fully fledged debut album.

Positioned as a hard rock outfit, H&HG really sound like they'd be happier as a full-on metal band, judging by the crunchy riffing here; tracks like *Adrenaline, For The Weakened* and *My Sickness* possess pleasant chugging echoes of mid-paced Metallica and Judas Priest and leave you wishing the production would add just a bit more heft and heaviness. Bravely aiming for some variety and sophistication, *In The Crowd* combines minimal verses with whip-crack rocking choruses, while *I Hide* is less successful, the lightweight verses just too long-winded before the chorus payoff.

Solid melodic heavy rock that could go further.

Essi Berelian

Accept

Too Mean To Die NUCLEAR BLAST

It's balls-to-the-wall, man!

1982 was surely the greatest year ever for German heavy metal, with the Scorpions' breakthrough album *Blackout*, followed by Accept's *Restless And Wild* on which the young pretenders' proto-thrash onslaught *Fast As A Shark* really put the 'manic' in 'Germanic'. And battle-hardened veterans Accept are still going at it with astonishing intensity.

Produced by current Judas Priest guitarist Andy Sneap, *Too Mean To Die* is Accept's sixteenth studio album, their fifth with American singer Mark Tornillo, and the first with Martin Motnik on bass and Philip Shouse as part of a three-guitar attack alongside Uwe Lulis and totemic founder member Wolf Hoffmann. On head-banging anthems – *Zombie Apocalypse* frenetic, *The Undertaker* grindingly slow – Tornillo growls and shrieks like his predecessor Udo Dirkschneider, *The Best Is Yet To Come* is a ballad but heavy-handed with it, and on *Samson And Delilah* Hoffmann shines on an instrumental as epic as the Scorpions' *Coast To Coast*.

Paul Elliott

Stony Sugarskull

Lioness INITIATIVE MUSIC

Avant.rock gem from Berlin-based chanteuse.

A vehicle for the vivid imagination of Dr Monika Demmler (a Gaia-influenced German performance artist whose path to self-discovery involved a serious car crash and a trip through America's Deep South) Stony Sugarskull are, on the evidence of this record, a force to be reckoned with.

Veering between numbskull punk, hazy dream-pop, post-rock boogie and paranoia blues, her debut offers up surprises at every turn, her Mazzy Star-ish vocals switching between English and German as smoothly as her music transcends genres. Shot through with a distinctly Berlin ennui and (it says here) recorded with "healing frequencies" embedded into each song, *Lioness* is a trip from start to finish.

Paul Moody

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Bai Kamara Jr: an album that's stylish and rich with substance.

MICHAEL CHIA/PRESS

Bai Kamara Jr & The Voodoo Sniffers

Salone MOOSICUS

The son of a Sierra Leone diplomat, Bai Kamara Jr was transplanted from the war-torn West African nation before the serious shit went down. But on *Salone* – the title is the Krio name for his homeland – the now Belgium-based bluesman looks back to his roots, fusing Western shapes with African percussion, and segueing from first-world concerns like the trials of the school run to the aftermath of civil war.

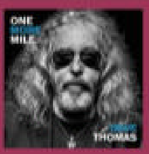
Broadly, you'd call Kamara an acoustic bluesman, but that's reductive to a musician whose songs keep you guessing, sonically and compositionally. From the vocals sung into a scratchy mic that makes *Can't Wait Here Too Long* such an eerie opener, to the dancing electric lick that takes *Cold Cold Love* into the realms of African highlife, there's always something to lift this material.

The most powerful moment is *Homecoming*. A hypnotic lament written upon his return to Sierra Leone in 2007, searching for his childhood memories, it's stylish and rich with substance – praise that applies to everything on this album.

Dave Thomas

One More Mile

BLONDE BLONDE



The British veteran admits he's "running late", but while old standards like *It's My Own Fault* and *One More Mile To Go* are familiar, Thomas executes them with rare class and a lifer's touch. He can write 'em too, with *I Like My Chicken Fried* managing to get a credible blues out of watching his partner knock up a fried breakfast. Great fun.

Erja Lyytinen

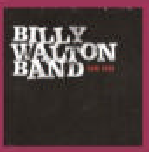
Lockdown Live 2020

TUOHI

Finland's slide queen wasn't the first to stream a lockdown show, but in a world of forlorn frontmen strumming into a webcam, this full-band performance is fiery and somewhat approaching the good old days. Lyytinen's chops are as good as any slider out there, but it's the joy that stays with you, the band clearly thrilled to be back on the boards.

Billy Walton Band

Dark Hour HARMONIZED



On the New Jersey shoreline, you hit 'em hard and you hit 'em fast. These are lessons that former Southside Johnny guitarist Billy Walton carries into *Dark Hour*. While there's a brilliant, vein-bulging muscle to moments like *Long Slow Descent*, recording in Philadelphia has perhaps has upped the soul quota – try *Confusion*, on which the brass section kills it.

Mike Ross

The Clovis Limit Pt.2 TALLER

You need to know Mike Ross. This latest album flies out of the blocks with a streak of gems that could drop right into the southern rock canon. But while the Brighton-based bluesman has all the riffs (try opener *Thanks A Lot*), he's a planet-brained writer too, dropping double-time sections and space-rock detours, and playing percussion on cardboard boxes for *The Loser's* Humble Pie-evoking strum.

Foxy Shazam

Burn EEE OOO AH

Swashbuckling neo-glam eccentrics return from seven-year sabbatical.

A decade ago, Cincinnati glam-punk dandies Foxy Shazam seemed poised for greatness, their high-camp theatricality and incendiary live shows earning rave reviews and major-label deals. Their dynamic, androgynous, preposterously coiffed frontman Eric Sean Nally always had live-wire charisma to burn, even if his fissile talents never quite translated into commercial traction during Foxy's erratic first decade.

After an ill-advised, undercooked excursion into lo-fi garage-rock minimalism on their 2014 album *Gonzo*, the band went on open-ended hiatus. Nally later had a hit-single collaboration with Seattle pop-rapper Macklemore, and the Foxy music fell silent, apparently forever. Yet here they are again, rebooted and reconfigured for a second shot at the big prizes that eluded them last time.

Channelling Mick Jagger, James Brown and Freddie Mercury via Justin Hawkins and Noel Fielding, Nally's forte remains high-octane showmanship. But for much of *Burn* he seems to play it uncharacteristically safe, clothing fairly straight pop-rock numbers in cosmetic freak-show drag. Swashbuckling saloon-bar bacchanals like *Doomed* and *S.Y.A.A.F.* are pretty decent retro-pastiche affairs that fall somewhere between Springsteen and Meat Loaf, while *Suffering* begins as ballsy rock'n'soul before shifting gear into proggy, liturgical chanting. *Dreamer*, the strongest of the album's taster singles, is a sumptuous power ballad that swells from dainty piano twinkle to multi-tracked operatic bombast –imagine Sparks covering *November Rain*. Also pleasingly overstuffed with melodrama is galloping glam-slam anthem *Burn* itself.

One key saving grace of the album is the return of drummer Teddy Aitkins, who first played with the Shazams briefly back in 2007. As well as clobbering percussion, Aitkins also takes lead vocals on two more stylistically adventurous tunes: the surreal gospel-ish lament *Never Ever* and the trippy, Auto-Tuned R&B pastoral *Into The Wild*, strange but lovely.

Foxy Shazam deserve a bigger audience, which might explain why this comeback project contains some of their most conventional glam-pop to date. If *Burn* helps them finally realise their full potential, then these straighter tracks will serve a valid Trojan-horse purpose. But Nally's exotic peacock-rockers need to keep the faith in their wilder, weirder, arty-party side too. Achieving true greatness will require both.

Stephen Dalton

Steve Earle & The Dukes

J.T. NEW WEST

Country-rock veteran pays tribute to his late son by celebrating his life's work.

In a long, varied and often chaotic career, at the age of 65 Steve Earle has arrived at the most personally significant album of his life. On August 20, 2020, the country star's eldest son, Americana musician Justin Townes Earle, died at the age of 39, leaving behind a celebrated body of work. *J.T.* is a father's tribute to his lost boy, a collection of covers of some of Justin's finest songs, and the result is at once joyous, poignant and heartbreaking.

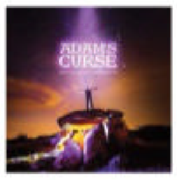
Storytelling is of course at the heart of country music, and Justin was a scholar of the form, at once defiant and damaged, with a side of tongue-in-cheek humour, and there's a great sense of pride in Steve's gruff but buttery vocal, running the gamut from the sprightly, fiddle-flecked bluegrass of *I Don't Care* to the surprising pop of *Maria*, a song you can imagine Elvis Costello relishing. In a perfect eulogy for a troubled soul, Steve Earle writes his final goodnight in the almost unbearably intimate *Last Words* and, you sense, the search for meaning and healing through music begins.

Emma Johnston

Adam's Curse

What The Ancients Knew About Us BAD REPUTATION

Former Glyder guitarist's solo project debut.



Irish hard rockers Glyder regularly looked likely to step up to headline slots in the late noughties, when they opened for avowed inspirations Thin Lizzy, Thunder, Slash, Blue Öyster Cult et al. It never quite happened for them, but guitarist Bat Kinane showed he can write a decent tune or two.

He reinforces that impression on the first album from his new solo project. Opener *A Vibe For Philo* refers back to Glyder's origins (they originally formed in 2004 to play at the annual Phil Lynott tribute show), with a compelling, standard-bearing stomp coloured with Lizzy-style twin-guitar decoration. Kinane's voice can be something of a weak link, though. Unlike his guitar playing, it lacks distinctiveness or resonance when fronting rockier material, and is better suited to folkier songs like the acoustically based, righteously indignant *Poison Spring*.

Johnny Sharp

Drive-By Truckers

The New OK ATO

Anger management.

They used to make languid, boozy epic albums that lasted for days; now Drive-By Truckers make compact, snub-nosed records where no notes are wasted – and in 2020 they made two of them.

The New OK is a bookend along with *The Unravelling* (and, in proper rock tradition, even includes a song called *The Unravelling*), and shares that album's anger at the recent political situation on the likes of the title track and *Watching The Orange Clouds*. But while *The Unravelling* was informed by despair, on *The New OK* the anger sounds more focused and fight has returned. There's even room for a gorgeous Stax Records homage (*Sea Island Lonely*, with its Otis Redding horn lift) and, most unexpected and welcome, a soundalike cover of the Ramones' *The KKK Took My Baby Away*. A fantastic rocket of a record, which adds to the renaissance brilliance of 21st-century Truckers.

David Quantick

Sodom

Genesis XIX STEAMHAMMER/SPV

Thrash like you mean it.

Forged in the satanic mills of Venom and Motörhead back in 1981, Sodom have proved themselves every bit as enduring as their fellow German thrash frontrunners Kreator and Destruction. And even as the band approach their fourth decade in business, here they serve up their finest record since 2006's self-titled delight.

As he does every few years, gravel-throated bass batterer Tom Angelripper has rebuilt the band around him. Rejoined by Frank Blackfire, who played guitar on a couple of the band's 80s heyday albums, plus some fresh young blood, Tom leads his new crew through a downright filthy and heartily exhilarating celebration of all that's awesome

about Sodom. The likes of *Sodom & Gomorrah*, *Glock 'N' Roll* and *The Harpooneer* smack the listener witless, before the breathtaking *Friendly Fire* delivers the final killer blow.

Not just the greatest thrash record of 2020, but also a prime metal release full-stop, *Genesis XIX* is a monster of Biblical proportions.

Jason Arnopp

Armored Saint

Punching The Sky METAL BLADE

Eclectic 80s metal diehards continue to deliver the goods.

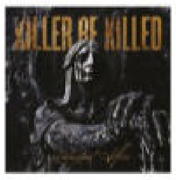
Five years on from the widely praised *Win Hands Down*, with *Punching The Sky* Armored Saint have conjured another master class in absurdly uplifting melodic heavy metal. Aside from having one of metal's greatest ever voices in John Bush, the Los Angeles veterans have always stood apart from their peers thanks to the classiness of their songwriting. *Punching The Sky* is stuffed to the gills with incredibly memorable and rousing anthems, while also exhibiting plenty of the diversity and imagination that has informed the band's sound since 1991's seminal *Symbol Of Salvation*. From the opening brace of epic rabble rousers *Standing On The Shoulders Of Giant* and *End Of The Attention Span* to snotty hard rockers like *My Jurisdiction* and *Bark, No Bite*, Armored Saint are on blistering form, and *still* deserve to be much, much bigger than they are.

Dom Lawson

Killer Be Killed

Reluctant Hero NUCLEAR BLAST

Sublime controlled chaos from experimental metal all-stars.



In a world where everything can be commodified, it's a joy when something comes along that is pure art for art's sake. None of the men involved in metal supergroup Killer Be Killed *need* this project, but given the musical chemistry that is so palpable on this, their second album, it's clearly a labour of love.

It's also the sound of absolute freedom of expression, the tag team of three distinct voices – Max Cavalera's ursine growl, Greg Puciato's smooth croon and Troy Sanders's stag bellow – complementing each other thrillingly amid merciless percussion from Converge's Ben Koller. While those voices can't help but evoke Sepultura, the Dillinger Escape Plan, the Black Queen and Mastodon, Killer Be Killed are an entirely different beast, a snarling maelstrom of ideas that confounds at every turn. So while *Inner Calm From Outer Storms* makes a seamless transition from swirling, dark art-rock beauty to vicious nosebleed thrash, *Animus*, starting with a jarring, horrible stab of feedback followed by a full-pelt hardcore rant, offers one minute and seven seconds of pure, life-affirming filth.

A divine meeting of minds, *Reluctant Hero* is a breathtaking trip into the unknown.

Emma Johnston

Steve Perry

Traces (Alternative Versions & Sketches) FANTASY

Singer reworks his long-awaited comeback album.

There was a school of thinking that when Steve Perry returned after 25 years with his *Traces* album, his voice was a shadow of the sonic bolt that changed music in 1981. Admittedly the vocal gymnastics that served as the outro to *Don't Stop Believin'* were a mere memory, but the familiar tone and sublime delivery were as scintillating as ever.

That's even more so here on the stripped-back and acoustic versions of the songs that made up Perry's return to music. With minimal backing, Perry shines, and makes you realise you how much you'd pay to see him perform live in a simple setting of piano and acoustic guitars, his voice the focus of every single, heartbreaking song.

Philip Wilding

Front Line Assembly

Mechanical Soul METROPOLIS

Rich sonic textures off the Assembly line.

The album title *Mechanical Soul* sums up the life's work of Canadian electro-industrialists Bill Leeb and Rhys Fulber. Across their career they've created hypnotic, robotic soundscapes, then pasted in ice-cold, ethereal human voices. Interestingly, the group have come full circle stylistically over the decades. Having started out as a purely electronic concern in the mid-80s, they introduced increasingly heavy guitar in the 90s and collaborated with Fear Factory. Upon returning to their roots almost 10 years ago, however, they all but eschewed the axe, and *Mechanical Soul* is a virtually guitar-free zone, save for a few power chords from Fear Factory's Dino Cazares on the punchy *Stifle*.

A slow-burn affair that rewards each new listen, as opposed to an instant dancefloor filler, the album boasts such rousing highlights as the opening *Purge, Glass And Leather* and *Unknown*. The mightiest song of all might be *Barbarians*, which ropes in guest singer Jean-Luc Demeyer from Front 242 for a towering, tuneful and hugely memorable anthem. Showcasing a less bombastic but more mature Front Line Assembly, who wield rich sonic textures with care, *Mechanical Soul* conjures bewitching ghosts in the machine.

Jason Arnopp

Here Lies Man

Ritual Divination RIDINGEASY

The invention of Jazz Sabbath gains traction on album four.

The concept of making a soundtrack to an imaginary movie has done the rounds so often over the decades that it's reached the point of self-parody. And yet, in Here Lies Man's deft hands it makes perfect sense, the first sign of the merest hint of cliché banished from their door.

Formed by members of Afrobeat outfit Antibalas, Here Lies Man take the spectacular, insistent, Fela Kuti-inspired groove of that genre and use it to reinvent the heavy metal blueprint laid out by Black Sabbath, and the result is ingenious and mesmerising. *In These Dreams* and, in particular, *What You See* glory in riffs that could have come from the hand of Iommi. The combination is magical, a psychedelic journey that warps time and perception, drummer Geoff Mann granting the beast a delicate and very beautiful heart.

Join them on their trip to inner space, you won't regret it.

Emma Johnston

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Crazy Arm

Dark Hands, Thunderbolts XTRA MILE

This genre-oblivious Devon octet infuse infectious irresistibility with punk energy, political bite, cinematic dynamism, Tex-Mex-ed Morricone Americana and a near-prog complexity. Staggeringly ambitious. **9/10**

Green Druid

At The Maw Of Ruin EARACHE

Soul-crushing doom from Denver that makes Sleep seem positively perky. Five lengthy pieces that mirror the side effects of mixing Mogadons with peyote, and the world's least/most likely Portishead cover. **7/10**

Half Japanese

Crazy Hearts FIRE

Was perpetually alt-er-than-alt outsider's outsider Jad Fair actually a genius all along? This lush nineteenth album from today's five-piece Halves retains naive charm while delivering occasional brilliance. **8/10**

Black Paisley

Rambler BLACK PAISLEY AB

Recharged by a revamped line-up, veteran Swede-rock traditionalists Black Paisley (now featuring Electric Boys guitarist Franco Santunione) boast a beefed-up, hard-driving line in hook-heavy AOR swagger. **7/10**

The Broken Beats

The Gig TARGET

From irresistible slabs of muscular power-pop to mellow atmospheric moments that recall Richard Hawley, this seventh from Danish singer, songwriter and guitarist Kim Munk's BBs oozes melancholic class. **7/10**

Less Than Jake

Silver Linings PURE NOISE

With each album, veteran Floridians LTJ are less a ska-punk quintet and more a popcore trio whose NOFX-paced riffs are augmented with a duo of horns and occasional moments of bullish skankability. **7/10**

The Pawn Shop Saints

Ordinary Folks DOLLYROCKER

Coal-black, thick with regret, dirt-road Americana. Dead bodies, cheap weed, mean girls, Listerine, meth. Broken characters who smoke a pack a day and hate the taste of every one. *Ordinary Folks* is painfully evocative misery porn. **7/10**

LICE

Wasteland: What Ails Our People Is Clear SETTLED LAW

Genuinely exciting stuff from instinctively experimental Bristol post-punks who evoke Fall and Futurists alike. *Wasteland*'s conceptual breadth, depth and complexity may challenge convention but offers rich rewards. **8/10**

Nicarus

Coal People Coal Puppets BANDCAMP

One-woman Israeli experimentation machine Tali Green combines her doom-laden alt.rock noir with skewed Swervedriving, shoegazing Death Valley psych and dark, Siouxsie-via-Kate Bush charisma. **8/10**

Hunted By Elephants

Carry On HUNTEDBYELEPHANTS.COM

With riffs and grooves reminicent of rock's fabled 70s greats, the melodic punch of Lizzy and the vocal soul of vintage Cov, London-based quartet HBE sweat potential, but might be too classic for their own good. **7/10**

Peter Black

If This Is The Hand I'm Dealt / I'm Gonna Cheat As Much As I Can COOL BANANAS

A surprisingly toothless and insipid solo duo from Hard-Ons frontman Blackie. *I'm Gonna Cheat* is electric, *If This* is acoustic, but fans of his former band's blurring Ramones-alike thrash best look elsewhere. **6/10**

Seasick Steve

Blues In Mono THERE'S A DEAD SKUNK

A dozen intimate solo acoustic readings of such dusty, bearded country blues classics as Willie Dixon's *My Babe* and Charlie Patton's *Moon Going Down*. As free-range, organic and predictable as music gets. **7/10**

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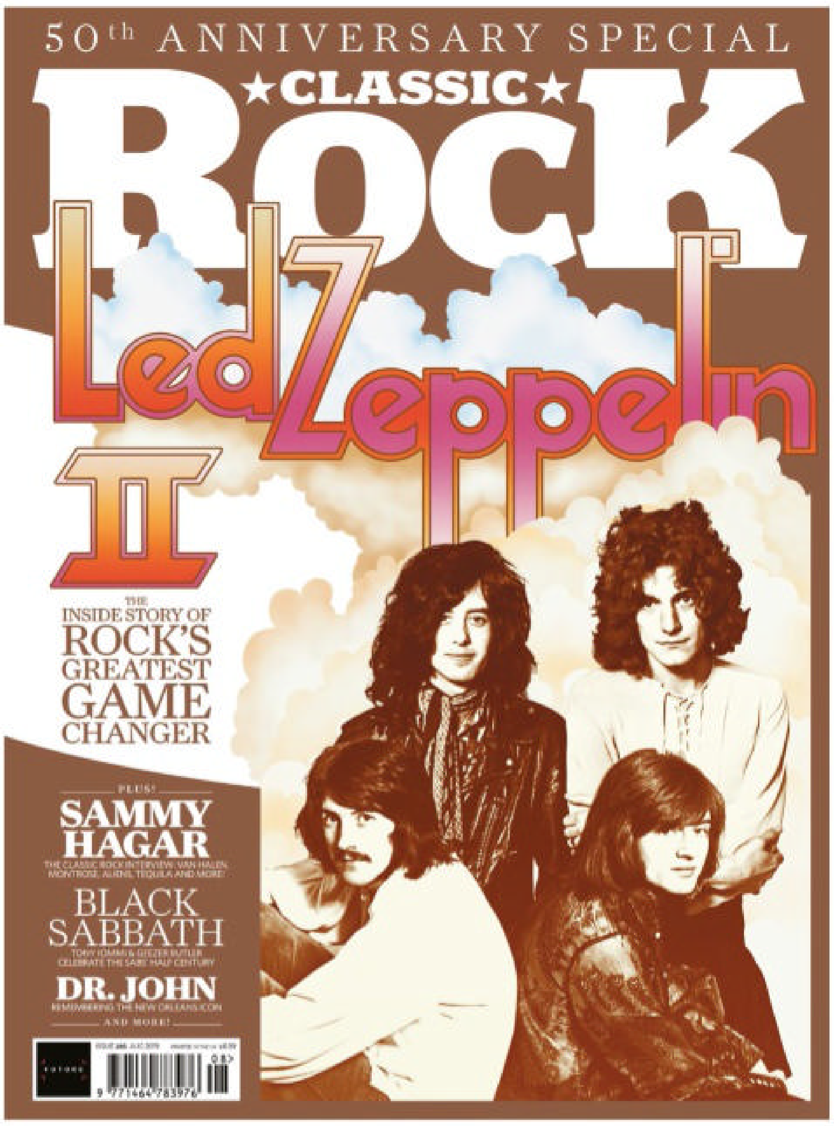

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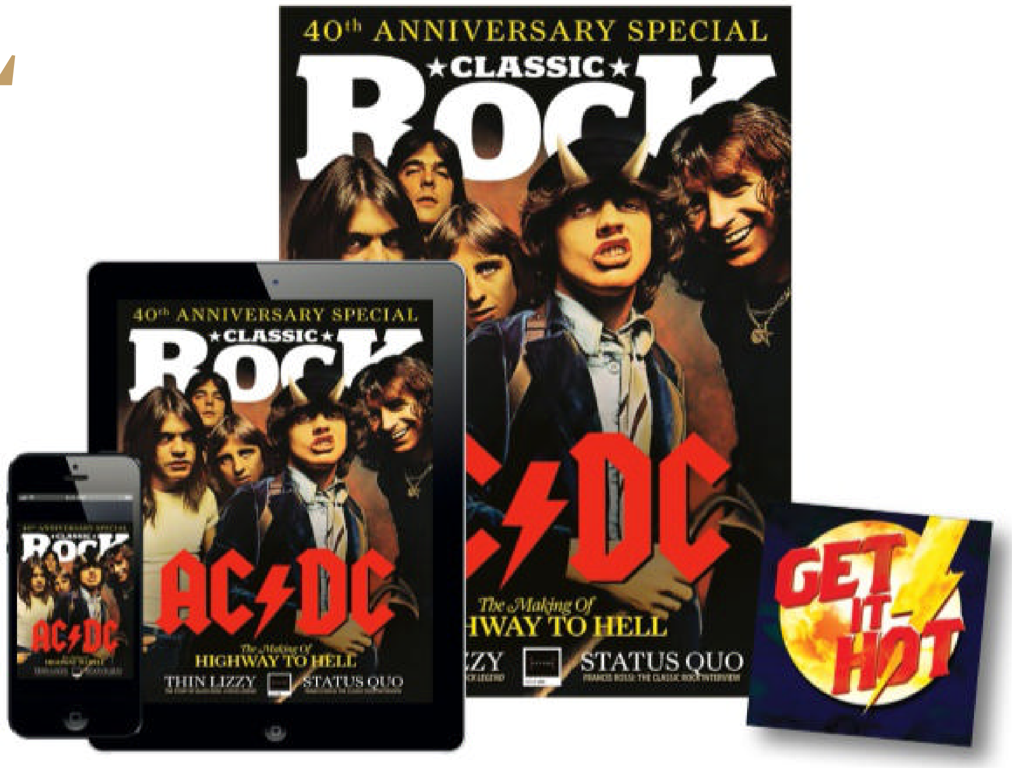

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

Deftones

White Pony/Black Stallion REPRISE/WARNER

Nu metal pioneers' acclaimed third album gets a 20th-anniversary spruce up.

To call Deftones the smartest of nu metal's first wave is damning them with faint praise, given the low bar set by their contemporaries. But the Sacramento band were clever enough to dispense with the genre's more boneheaded clichés quicker than you could say "For Christ's sake pull those jeans up." By the time of their masterful third album, 2000's *White Pony*, they had transformed into something entirely different: the Radiohead of metal.

This 20th-anniversary reissue is a reminder of just how great that album was and is. Deftones were swimming in a deeper pool of influences than the likes of Korn and Limp Bizkit, and *White Pony* owed more to The Cure and groundbreaking Sheffield electronic label Warp than it did to Rage Against The Machine and Faith No More. So stubborn in the desire to do something different were the band that the album's original opener, *Feiticeira*, didn't possess anything so conventional as a chorus, instead the ebb and flow of jagged noise, with singer Chino Moreno howling like a wounded dog over the top. It's no surprise that their label strong-armed them into reissuing the album soon afterwards with a more traditional new song, *Back To School (Mini Maggit)*, kicking it off.

That's not to say Deftones couldn't knock out a catchy tune when they needed to, even if their concept of 'catchy' didn't bear much resemblance to anyone else's. *Digital Bath* explodes from whispered, near-ambient verses into a big, ball-of-angst chorus, while *Passenger* – a duet with Tool singer Maynard James Keenan and up there with the best songs either party have recorded – glides like a driverless car, until someone wallops the 'turbo' button as it reaches its climax.

This reissue comes packaged with a companion disc, *Black Stallion*, featuring *White Pony*'s 11 original tracks remixed by assorted electronic musicians and DJs. Unusually among this sort of thing, it's a uniformly impressive feat of deconstruction and reconstruction. Canadian electro-pop band The Purity Ring turn *Knife Party*'s impressionistic teenage deathwish fantasy into something celestial, while Linkin Park's Mike Shinoda reimagines *Passenger* into a disorientating nocturnal road-trip.

White Pony was a tipping point not just for Deftones' relationship with nu metal, but also for nu metal itself: the baseball-capped hordes suddenly looked very stupid. Not difficult, granted, but Deftones were too busy accelerating into the future to care.

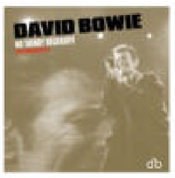
Rating: 9/10

Dave Everley

David Bowie

No Trendy Réchauffé ISO

Bowie at his live best.



In a slew of newly released Bowie shows, *No Trendy Réchauffé* is something of a stand-out. Recorded in Birmingham in 1995, this is a live show from an odd time in Bowie's career, when he had gone through greatest hits request tours, Tin Machine, a return to the album charts with *Black Tie White Noise*, and was touring *1.Outside*, his most art-rock album.

Perhaps as a result, *No Trendy Réchauffé* is chomping at the bit like a mad-eyed stallion high on horse speed with an extraordinary energy. This is Bowie's most rock live album ever, from a screaming *Scary Monsters* to a chunky *Look Back In Anger* and all points between. There's a rare live version of *Teenage Wildlife* (the stadium rock *"Heroes"*) that's jaw-droppingly great, and nothing here disappoints. The selections from *1.Outside*, such as the folk-hop *I Have Not Been To Oxford Town* and the wafting *The Motel*, work well live, Bowie is in a great mood (rare encores from an encoreless period), and the often overlooked and underrated band – Gail-Ann Dorsey, Mike Garson, Carlos Alomar, Zack Alford – are superb. There are few oldies, in keeping with Bowie's then strictures, so this is a rare *Jean Genie*-less concert, but there is a sterling *Under Pressure* (and what a weird song that is), as well as an insanely muscular *Moonage Daydream*.

No Trendy Réchauffé is one of the great Bowie live albums, and almost certainly the best of his later period, and an essential purchase for dudes of all ages.

Rating: 9/10

David Quantick

Paradise Lost

Draconian Times 25th Anniversary MUSIC FOR NATIONS

Halifax's finest revisit their breakthrough behemoth.

If you believe some of the twaddle peddled these days, you might think that we all spent the 90s listening to boring grunge bands. In fact many of us spent countless hours banging our heads very slowly to this monumental classic – the album with which Paradise Lost made the unlikely leap from underground heroes status to something approaching mainstream rock acceptance. In truth, *Draconian Times* was a dark and intense record, but one leavened by big rock melodies, a dash of Metallica-like bombast and a whole heap of gothic menace.

Twenty-five years on, it still sounds fantastic. A relentless stream of great songs, delivered with utmost conviction. The best of them – *Enchantment, Forever Failure*, the simply magnificent *Yearn For Change* – gave little hints at the direction Paradise Lost would take on subsequent albums, polarising their fan base in the process. But *Draconian Times* was a flat-out triumph.

Bolstered here by four tracks from BBC live sessions, eight demo tracks and a genuinely brilliant cover of the Sisters Of Mercy's *Walk Away*, this is a fine snapshot of a band hitting their stride and refining their songwriting chops in the process.

A quarter of a century later, they're making some of the greatest music of their career, the durable bastards.

Rating: 8/10

Dom Lawson

Rhinoceros

The Elektra Albums 1968 – 1970 ESOTERIC

Three albums from overlooked 60s supergroup, now in one handy package.

The vexed notion of 'authenticity' has dogged rock music since the 1960s. Back then it was all about forming your band from the ground up to stick it to the Man – before accepting his advance, expensive drinks and exotic yet deadly substances. Manufactured bands were therefore to be treated with derision and suspicion. Hence why Led Zeppelin, surely the most famous example of all, suffered so harshly at the hands of contemporary critics. Little wonder that Jimmy Page had the last laugh in naming his publishing company, Superhype.

It's an attitude that's ensured that late-60s supergroup Rhinoceros have fallen down the back of rock history's sofa. Created in 1967 by producer Paul Rothchild – then riding high with the success of The Doors – Rhinoceros featured former members of Iron Butterfly, the Mothers Of Invention and

JAMES MINCHIN/PRESS

Buffalo Springfield, among others, and the initial plan was to create the heaviest band of the era. Instead, over the course of three albums (*Rhinoceros*, *Satin Chickens* and *Better Times Are Coming*), the band set about recording rock-inflected blue-eyed soul.

The earlier material holds up the best. The languid groove of *When You Say You're Sorry* satisfies, while the filthy funk of *Apricot Brandy* is deliciously intoxicating. *I Will Serenade You* and *You're My Girl*'s slinky soul would later be covered by Three Dog Night and Rod Stewart respectively. Later cuts *Funk Butt* and *Back Door* reveal Rhinoceros's muso origins, but for the most part this is music ripe for re-discovery.

Believe the hype.

Julian Marszalek

Seether

Reissues CRAFT

Trio of Pretoria post-grungers' mid-2000s albums reissued on viny.

South Africa's hard rock history is hardly renowned, but Seether wrote a prominent chapter in the early 00s by blending a brooding, malcontented grunge sound with enough sparky metalcore fire to turn heads just as nu metal began to plod.

The first of these reissued vinyl sets, 2004's *Disclaimer II* (**8/10**), was an extended overhaul of their 2002 debut, and the hit makeover of *Broken* alongside Evanescence's Amy Lee pushes the parameters of a sound at other corners of which are the Nirvana-ish *Gasoline* and the howling, metal-charged *Needles*.

The ghost of Kurt Cobain also looms large over *Remedy*, which gets *Karma And Effect* (2005, **7/10**) up and running, and there's a sense of a winning formula repeated in the arena-sized introspection of *Truth* and *The Gift*, but they also trash the place in style on splenetic opener *Because Of Me*.

Finding Beauty In Negative Spaces (2007, **8/10**) saw frontman and lyricist Shaun Morgan finding solace after a spell in rehab and a romantic split with Ms Lee, through the insistent hooks of *Fake It* and the anthemic *Rise Above This*. Those are matched as highlights by the slow-building rage of *No Jesus Christ* and the snarling anti-ballad *FLYHM*, showing that songwriting versatility has always been Seether's saving grace.

Johnny Sharp

Martin Barre

50 Years Of Jethro Tull

STORE FOR MUSIC

Tull guitarist, acoustic, electric and eclectic.

When well-. loved bands split, the factions often tarnish their legacies with mudslinging and rival incarnations. Jethro Tull mainstays Ian Anderson and Martin Barre have conducted themselves in relatively dignified fashion since parting ways, although chances of a reunion are slim, with the two having marked the band's 50th anniversary separately.

Barre's aim with this double album is to celebrate Tull's half-century "with due thought and care", and he succeeds in doing so by adapting staple tracks and deeper cuts to suit the two-guitar format (no flute, no keyboards) of his current band.

Disc one is all electric, offering forceful, vibrant takes on songs such as *Hymn 43* and, most notably, a punchy, earthy *Steel Monkey*. Flute lines are reimagined as resonant twin-guitar harmonies (*Hunting Girl*) and riffs (*For A Thousand Mothers*), giving the original melodies a fresh instrumental emphasis without overpowering the subtleties, and Barre's feisty solos are the work of a man who refuses to stagnate.

A second disc highlights Tull's acoustic material, with vocalists Alex Hart and Becca Langsford weaving resonant harmonies over Barre's deft finger-picking (*Wond'ring Aloud, One White Duck*), and on a roots-rock rearrangement of *Under Wraps*.

Previously sold at gigs, this new edition of the album adds four tight live tracks.

Rich Davenport

Mike Tramp

Trampthology TARGET

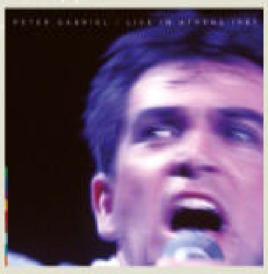
White Lion frontman's roots rock reinvention.

By the time White Lion's *Pride* (1987) cracked the US album charts, their frontman Mike Tramp was already 11 years into a career that began with teen popsters Mabel back home in Denmark. When grunge scalped hair-metal, Tramp started from scratch with the short-lived Freak Of Nature, and since 1996 he's put in the hard yards to establish himself as a solo artist

Trampthology is a double-length retrospective along with four new songs, gathering highlights from his 11 solo albums and charting a process of musical maturation that he attributes to "writing just for me, no one else". He frequently cites Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty as musical heroes, and aims for a similar rootsy sound with his own well-crafted songwriting. With him now singing with a lived-in grit, invariably over an acoustic bedrock layered with chiming electric guitar motifs, upbeat songs like *Give It All You Got* and *Dead End Ride* impress with their lingering melodies and passionate delivery. *Coming Home* and defiant new track *Ain't Done Yet* are brash rockers with hints of country, and the quality wavers only with two formulaic ballads.

While many of his contemporaries coast on nostalgia, Tramp continues to improve with age.

Rich Davenport



Peter Gabriel

Live reissues REAL WORLD

Gabriel's sensational live journey, from monkey man to tech-rock Merlin.

Peter Gabriel has treated the live arena as situationist theatre as much as musical performance. Over 45 solo years, he's utilised drama, daring and cutting-edge technology to expand the possibilities of the live spectacular, and that development is captured on these four live reissues.

You can't hear the stagecraft, but it dictates the tones. 1983's brilliantly scrappy *Plays Live* (**9/10**), leaning heavily on the post-punk and global experiments of Gabriel's fantastic self-titled albums of 1980 and 1982, bristles with fractured psychological mania and arcane moods. He scampers excitedly through the pop tracks (*Shock The Monkey, I Don't Remember*, effervescent synth-pop rarity *I Go Swimming*), highlights global political concerns (*San Jacinto, Biko*), or sets out to unsettle, terrify and disturb with *The Rhythm Of The Heat* or home-invasion creepfest *Intruder*.

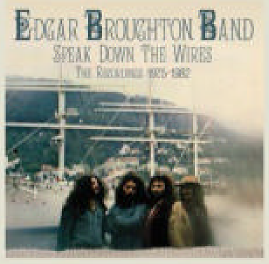
This is Gabriel as livewire theatrical fulcrum, an approach that reached its apex on the *So* tour, captured on *Live In Athens 1987* (**10/10**). The most interesting of these reissues – it languished as VHS-only film *PoV* for decades – *Athens* encompasses his commercial and performative peak. The jubilance of *Solsbury Hill, In Your Eyes* and *Sledgehammer* perfectly offset literate, intimate moments like *Mercy Street, Here Comes The Flood* and *Don't Give Up*. *Intruder* kicks the door down now, turned psycho by Manu Katché's demented drumming, *Games Without Frontiers* becomes an anti-war synth-pop anthem, and the set-pieces shine. The crazed chorus on a jazzed-up *No Self Control* has the angle-poise lighting rigs attacking Gabriel from above. The elemental roar during the cult-like *Lay Your Hands On Me* has him falling backwards into the audience in crucifix pose.

By 1994's *Secret World Live* (**8/10**) tour, Gabriel had surrendered much of this dark, urgent drama for hi-tech arena slickness. Enter several *Sledgehammer* clones (*Steam, Kiss That Frog*) and a world-music aura; warm, well-travelled, polite. Magnificent statement songs – *Secret World*; the (dare we say) bagpipe euphoria of *Come Talk To Me* – provide grandeur aplenty, but it wasn't until Gabriel's post-millennial industrial-lite rebirth, central to 2003's *Growing Up Live* (**9/10**), that he reclaimed his edge. The funk pop is more serrated (*The Barry Williams Show, Growing Up*) and a more measured menace returns: *Darkness*, the Brothers Grimm as told by NIN, borders once more on blissful nightmare. Even without the visual innovations, four jaw-dropping nights.

Mark Beaumont

Edgar Broughton Band

Speak Down The Wires: The Recordings 1975-1982 *ESOTERIC*



Compilation of four albums by hardy veteran Midlands rockers.

A product of the 60s blues-rock scene, Edgar Broughton Band first rose to prominence in 1969 with their Harvest Records debut album *Wasa Wasa*. By the mid-70s, however, they were in limbo, until they signed to the NEMS agency and released their sixth album, *Bandage*, a more flexible and nuanced departure from the acid-tinged hard rock for which they were previously known. This is evident on *Get A Rise*, with its bucolic honky-tonk managing to conflate improved wages for the working man with trouser arousal; raunch and social consciousness always featured strongly with the Edgar Broughton Band. Mike Oldfield contributes instrumentally, ranging from dulcimer to touches of ARP synth on what is a more thoughtful and well-arranged album than many might have expected.

Live Hits Harder!, the live album eventually released in 1979, is a reminder of EBB's rockier side, recorded on what was supposed to be their farewell tour, with *Love In The Rain* showing that Broughton coined the line '*Something came over me*' well in advance of Throbbing Gristle.

Parlez-Vous English? (1979) shows that the band (temporarily The Broughtons) were well up to speed with new-wave developments, on *Little One*, a Police pastiche rendered in an unfortunately comic West Midlands accent. What's admirable about EBB is that despite their reputation as purveyors of a boogie as ancient as England itself, and a band who have played every Corn Exchange up and down this fair land, they were willing to embrace the modernity of electronics on tracks like the synth-buffeted *Drivin' To Nowhere*, as well as the acoustic, pining nostalgia of *April In England*.

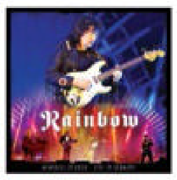
Come the 80s and a landscape slick with synth-pop, with *Superchip* the Edgar Broughton Band again showed their adaptability. Like Mike Batt around the same time, they tried to have their futurist cake and eat it, embracing the fashionable synthetic sounds and new-wave tropes of the day while using them to paint a picture of the dystopian decades to come. It's a concept album based on the chaos that ensues when the global computer banking system collapses. Unfortunately for their prognosis, but fortunately for the rest of us, this bleak vision did not come to pass. This was EBB's final studio album, a last, bold stab at relevance. They have endured, however, as an ongoing live concern. These reissues are a reminder of their range and ambition.

David Stubbs

Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow

Memories In Rock *EAGLE ROCK*

The return of the king.



It was the comeback that few thought would ever happen. When Ritchie Blackmore disbanded Rainbow in the late 90s to launch Blackmore's Night, in which he and his sweet-voiced wife Candice performed Renaissance-inspired folk music while dressed like extras from *Robin Hood: Men In Tights*, it seemed as though the legendary guitar hero had left his own past behind.

Not so. In 2016 he resurrected Rainbow with a new line-up, fronted by the young and largely unknown Chilean singer Ronnie Romero. And in the three shows they played that summer, the patience of Blackmore's fans was rewarded. The set was filled with classic songs from the 70s and 80s that Blackmore created with Deep Purple and Rainbow, and his masterful playing was undiminished. And while Romero was always destined to be the lesser of the two Ronnies in the Rainbow story, he had the power and range to justify Blackmore's confidence in him.

Recorded over two nights in Germany, *Memories In Rock*, originally released in 2016, is now reissued as a heavyweight triple-vinyl set. It could never equal the glory of Rainbow's monumental 1977 live album *On Stage*, with Ronnie James Dio in full cry, but it proved that Blackmore, when the mood took him, could still kick ass.

Paul Elliott

Young Marble Giants

Colossal Youth *DOMINO*

Silence is golden.

They named a song *N.I.T.A.* – nature intended the abstract. And there are worse mottos for Young Marble Giants, who knew all about the abstract. In the post-punk world of 1980, they stood out. Not just for the Moxham brothers' febrile insect funk riffs played on bass and apparently Farfisa organ, nor Alison Stratton's breathy vocals, but also for the sense of silence in air that this record produced.

Despite a heavy metal cover by Hole and praise by Kurt Cobain, there is nothing like this music: from the aptly named drift of *Wind In The Rigging* to the unspiralling *Salad Days*. Young Marble Giants experimented with radio static, with minimal sounds and with atmosphere, in a wistfully gorgeous, cameo-audio style. Only the Blue Nile are comparable, and next to Young Marble Giants they sound like Bon Jovi. There is no song more beautiful and sad about nuclear war than the extraordinary single *Final Day*, and there is no record quite like *Colossal Youth*, which even then stood out in a world of Stiff Little Fingers and Gang Of Fours.

This 40th-anniversary edition contains everything the trio released at the time, including their engaging, Stratton-less *Testcard* EP, and is an essential purchase for anyone who cares about music that falls down the cracks and likes it there.

David Quantick

Billion Dollar Babies

Battle Axe (Explanded) *HNE*

Alice's band goes it alone.

After the commercial flop of 1974's *Muscle Of Love*, Alice Cooper developed stars in his once spidery eyes, left his loyal band and set off for greener solo pastures. An Alice Cooper Band album, *Battle Axe*, was already being written, and would have most likely have been scuttled had the band (minus Glen Buxton) not rallied, bringing in hot-shot guitarist Mike Marconi to fill in and carrying on with a dizzy-brained futuristic rock-warrior concept. The resulting 1977 album went nowhere, but remains a pleasant slice of mid-70s AOR in the Angel/Hollywood Stars vein, anchored by hooky nuggets like would-be singles *Too Young* and *Rock N' Roll Radio*, which might have had a fighting chance had they been growled and crooned by hard-hearted Alice.

This generous box set will appeal mostly to hard-core Coop fans, but does include some vital extras. In particular, the second disc is a demo version of the album that features some outstanding non-album tracks, including the chewy glam-slammer *High Heels Hollywood*, and the third disc features their debut live show, a crackling set that not only tosses in a vintage Alice Cooper Band medley halfway through, but also ends

with a thunderous rendition of the classic they named themselves after. A fun what-if.

Sleazegrinder

Reuben

Racecar If Very Fast XTRA MILE

Cult British alt.rock heroes get a vinyl makeover.

If you want to have a sense of the British rock scene of the early 2000s, you could do a lot worse than to start with Reuben. They weren't the biggest band, but their first two albums – *Racecar Is Racecar Backwards* and *Very Fast Very Dangerous*, combined and reissued on double vinyl here – encapsulate perfectly the sense of fun and camaraderie, as well as the toughened grunge-emo sound, of the time.

Musically they slot right in among Hundred Reasons, early Biffy Clyro and Hell Is For Heroes (the latter are name-checked in *No-One Wins The War*), *Racecar* sprawling over 16 harmony-laden tracks, while *Very Fast* is tighter, more confident and more focused. What sets them apart, though, is Jamie Lenman's lyrics. At once geeky, self-deprecating, tongue-in-cheek and celebratory, they paint a perfect picture of the angst, triumphs and pop-culture obsessions of youth.

It all ended in 2008, but given the deep affection so many people have for this band, these songs still sound just as wide-eyed and fresh today.

Emma Johnston

Procol Harum

Something Magic ESOTERIC

Faced with the challenge of punk, Procol narrated a poem about worms.

In 1977, Procol Harum's album *Something Magic* was the kind of thing that gave prog a bad name. Little wonder they split up, at least for 14 years, after it died on its arse. Side one's uninspired pomp-pop wasn't too offensive, but the second half's 19-minute 'orchestral rock' horror is where the wheels come off and the dwarf crushes Stonehenge.

Arriving in Miami to find producers Ron and Howie Alpert rejecting half of his songs, Gary Brooker presented instead his epic arrangement for a Keith Reid poem – and decided to recite it instead of singing. Inauspicious already. But when the poem is a big scoop of hippie nonsense about a worm eating a tree from within until some dude with an axe comes to chop it down and all is redeemed, you know you're in the land of lame-ass allegory. Not many pop pickers chose to sing (or recite) along to something like '*the worm burst asunder, a vile smelling crust*', especially not in '77.

Obviously there's a wild glee in rediscovering something so bad, and now it's remastered with added bonus B-sides etc, but it takes the second disc, a live BBC concert, to save the day, sliding in the hits, devoid of worms.

Chris Roberts

Mötley Crüe

The End: Live In Los Angeles EAGLE ROCK

The Crüe's last stand (until the next one), on double vinyl.

Made infamous by their tawdry reputations, which Nikki Sixx is trying to claw back daily now the druggy scales have fallen from his kohl-lined eyes. Rewriting *The Dirt* as some kind of fable, not the diary notes of a band who revelled in running themselves off the road.

They really were dangerous too, once, although not by the time they got to the Staples Center on New Year's Eve 2015. A debilitated Mick Mars, and Vince Neil as wide as he was tall. There's no denying the songs, although not the way they're performed; Neil chews through the lyrics so hard on *Dr Feelgood* that he is coherent for about an eighth of it.

They should have thrown the dirt over these bloated bodies once the curtain fell, but, like a reconstituted Michael Myers, the Crüe keep coming back, less entertaining but just as annoying as before.

Philip Wilding

New Model Army

Carnival EARMUSIC

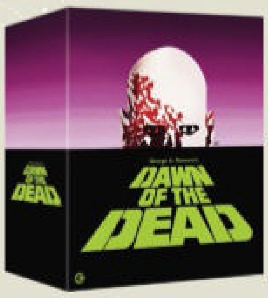
Raw-melody men reimagine mid-noughties record.

It might seem odd for a band always forging ahead and as uncompromising as New Model Army to look back at one of their albums, let alone tinker with it, but that's what's happened with *Carnival*. For main songwriter Justin Sullivan and company, their 2005 album, produced by the renowned Chris Tsangarides, didn't quite live up to the vision they had of a widescreen cornucopia of eclectic sound and drama. So given the chance, they've now let Lee Smith, their most recent production collaborator, loose on it to give it a remix and polish – definitely no re-recording involved.

The result is sonically excellent and expansive, and it doesn't stop there. They've also added four B-sides and associated tracks added to the original tracklisting, taking it up to 15 songs. *Rumour & Rapture (1650)*, *Caslen (Christmas)*, the latter originally a Nelson acoustic instrumental now with lyrics, and full band versions of *One Bullet* and *Stoned, Fired And Full Of Grace* are all excellent additions and fit neatly into the resequenced album, which is still book-ended by opener *Water* and the closing Rob Heaton tribute *Fireworks Night*.

In its new form *Carnival* exceeds the limits of the original version and appears to be truer to the original blueprint.

Essi Berelian



Goblin

Zombi – Dawn Of The Dead: The Complete Original Motion Picture Soundtrack SECOND SIGHT FILMS

It lives! Italian prog impresarios give the zombies something to get their teeth into.

Basically *Black Friday 2020: The Movie*, Goblin's *Dawn Of The Dead* is widely acclaimed as a consumerist satire, rendered even more prescient in a pandemic, characterised by the cynical political juggling act between death and shopping. It's also renowned among zombiephiles for its soundtrack by Italian prog-rock instrumentalists Goblin, first released in '78 and now included in a *Dawn Of The Dead* box set in its full 17-track form, including alternative takes that only came out in 2018.

It might not be the soundtrack you're thinking of, however; George E Romero's cut of the film relied on incidental stock music from the De Wolfe Library, hence the random inclusions of The Pretty Things' *'Cause I'm A Man*, and cheesy trumpet polka *The Gonk* highlighting the zombies' semi-comic instincts for gormless browsing. Goblin's version was recorded for co-writer Dario Argento's international cut of the movie, lacing that version with an artful 70s panache.

If it's evocations of grey-faced, shuffling undead you're after, best look elsewhere (although not through that loosely boarded-up window, if I were you). Ponderous, Floyd-ish opener *L'Alba Dei Morti Viventi* – all funereal kettle drums, church bells and deathly organ – plods along eerily as though it's got a whiff of your small intestine, and *Zombi* is coloured with flesh-gnawing staccato synths and menacing choral drones, albeit built around a funk groove far too fresh for the grave. Beyond that, *Zombi* is a playful exercise in eclecticism: ragtime interludes, African tribal pieces, country folk tumbles, dusky jazz slumbers…It's more a random jumble of dinner party moods than music to chew out a pancreas to.

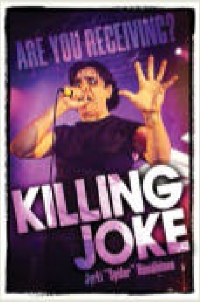
The blood really gets pumping when Goblin turn their Euro-prog eye on the changing face of late-70s electronica and rock: *Zaratazom* pioneers common ground between Kraftwerk and power-chord metal, *Ai Margini Della Follia* is all synthetic bubbles and electro-marimba, and the dramatic synth prog of *La Caccia* isn't far removed from late-70s Genesis.

Forty years on, *Zombi* still moves nimbly enough to stop the rot setting in.

Mark Beaumont

GETTY

Killing Joke: Are You Receiving?



Jyrki "Spider" Hamalainen *NEW HAVEN*

Geared to the 'Gatherers', a valiant if patchy stab at the first book about Killing Joke.

Considering Killing Joke's colossal influence and awe-inspiring standing, it's shocking that there hasn't been a biography of the band until now. Invoking hoary bus analogies, there will be *two* purporting to tell this uniquely dysfunctional band's chaotic story when Chris Ryan's *A Prophecy Fulfilled* oral history joins *Are You Receiving?*, Finnish fan Hamalainen's just-published mix of interviews, cut-and-paste press clippings and online research that has already been well-received by KJ's 'Gatherers' fan base.

Killing Joke's 21st-century exploits fare much better here than the their origins and first phase, which curiously omits childhood events and starts with Youth's short tenure in 4" Be 2", before Jaz and Big Paul emerge playing in Matt Stagger, Geordie arrives from Milton Keynes and Youth answers a *Melody Maker* ad in early '79.

It would've helped greatly if the author had consulted Youth's barely mentioned school and squat mate Alex Paterson, the roadie (and future Orb captain) who was like a fifth member from formation through the 80s. Also vital to the band's gestation was the Ladbroke Grove community that formed their close-knit circle, including fire-eater Dave the Wizard, whose pentagram rituals literally warmed up for the Joke's live onslaught (all only hinted at here). Along with formative rehearsals at Ear studios (often with Motörhead), early tours with Joy Division and Basement 5 escape the gigography, although occult background and Michael Coles's artwork is explored commendably. Strangely, Youth's '81 acid meltdown is repositioned to '82 (when he was recovering by forming the unmentioned Brilliant).

After the Goa techno connotations of signing to Youth's Butterfly operation in the 90s is missed, the book gains steam through recent interviews with Jaz and Youth, plus engineers giving exhaustive recording accounts; Dave Grohl overdubbing drums on 2003's *Killing Joke* is interesting considering their lawsuit against Nirvana over *Come As You Are* plundering *Eighties*.

Even considering that this is an independently published book written by a Finnish fan, employing an editor would've corrected wrong names and errors that inevitably grate. But Hamalainen's heart is in the right place, and Gatherers won't give a shit about typos now they've got a book about their band. While some of the magic and madness surrounding Killing Joke seeps through, we still await the authorised Biblical epic they deserve.

Kris Needs

Noise Damage

James Kennedy *UNDERDOG*

Indefatigable Welsh misfit's entertaining memoir of underachievement.

In theory, there's no reason for anyone to pick up the autobiography of a not particularly famous aspiring rock musician and read about his decades of struggle. But there's something that keeps you turning the pages of *Noise Damage*, even though its author has already admitted that there will be no Hollywood ending. That's chiefly thanks to his ebullient writing style, along with some hard-earned, hungover wisdom that starry-eyed hopefuls everywhere could do with a sobering dose of, along with the fizzing sense of joy Kennedy evokes from the moments that make the toilet-circuit slog worthwhile.

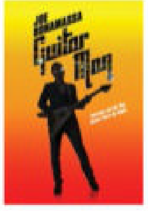
Exhaustion, addiction, screaming naked Germans, swine flu, therapy, label bosses fleeing the country with your cash… there's a lot to unpack. And like the prog-funk-punk-metal stew Kennedy's band Kyshera have made at times, it can feel self-indulgent. But if there's one key message from this book, it's that you've got to be true to yourself, even if you can sometimes count your audience on the fingers of a Twix.

Johnny Sharp

Joe Bonamassa

Guitar Man *PARAMOUNT*

Famously private bluesman tells all.



Anyone who has Joe Bonamassa's career pegged as 'album, tour, repeat' might be surprised by *Guitar Man*. Early on, the guitarist posts a disclaimer for anyone foolish enough to expect rock piggery ("I'm not exactly showbiz material"). But this engaging documentary unearths drama, humour and heartache you never knew was there.

Bonamassa is excellent on the knotty gear-shift from child star to adult artist ("Suddenly you're 18, and no one cares"). He's good-humoured on the exhumed footage of his floppy-fringed alt.rock youth, and enjoyably snippy on losing his major-label deal ("I ain't playing this pop shit any more").

The best chapter finds a heartbroken Bonamassa and his band draining 12 bottles of wine daily during recording sessions for 2009's *The Ballad Of John Henry*, while it's fascinating to learn that if he hadn't filled what turned out to be his breakthrough show at London's Royal Albert Hall that year he'd have gone bankrupt.

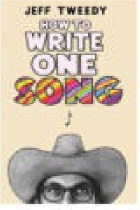
Henry Yates

Jeff Tweedy

How To Write One Song

FABER

Wilco boss explains how he does it.



As leader of Uncle Tupelo and then Wilco, plus having assorted solo projects, Jeff Tweedy's credentials as a songwriter are undisputed. So why not share the technique?

The slender *How To Write One Song* is a simple enough premise: esteemed songwriter guides non-songwriters through the process. Deep down, though, you suspect it's really written for himself as an attempt to formally capture his own magic. Initially, Tweedy's framework resembles a seminar for grandmothers on sucking eggs: do it regularly; write about yourself; don't write about yourself; give yourself deadlines; don't fret; etc. But when he graduates to "hot-wiring language", detailing how he finds and deploys words – theft, cut-up, everyday conversation – he gets interesting. Does it work? Possibly. But what he cannot account for is that some people (e.g. Jeff Tweedy) have whatever 'it' might be, while others (e.g. almost everyone else) does not. No guidebook can change that.

John Aizlewood

Swans

Where Does A Body End?

MVD

Long, slow, and hard. The band and the doc.

With its two hours-plus running time and incessantly philosophical ramble-tamble, this doc clearly aims to present the Swans story with the same glacier-paced, spaced-out bludgeon as its sonic source.

Anchored by lengthy interviews with main man Michael Gira and his long-suffering muse and ex-life/musical partner Jarboe, and sprinkled with testimonials from band members and celebrity boosters, it traces the band's journey in meticulous fashion from their earliest days as industrial noise-mongers in

GETTY

various bombed-out NYC dungeons in the mid-80s, to their rather dramatic reinvention as bliss-drone provocateurs playing sold-out theaters for wide-eyed devotees, including, strangely enough, an entirely new breed of enthusiastic teenage Swans fans. Throughout you witness Gira's development from youthful nihilist boozer to a sort of beatific cult leader, while Jarboe keeps things grounded by noting how often they got evicted from rat-hole apartments over the years. The story, as always, is in the telling.

Sleazegrinder

This Isn't Happening: Radiohead's Kid A And The Beginning Of The 21st Century

Steven Hyden HACHETTE

Engaging study of pivotal album, by author of *Twilight Of The Gods.*

"Ostentatious, self-congratulatory, look-ma-I-can-suck-my- own-cock whiny old rubbish," is how one UK reviewer described Radiohead's *Kid A* on its release in 2000. Shamefully, the album was received coolly in its native country at the time, considered to be an aberrant experiment following the neo-prog triumph of *OK Computer*. Here, Hyden places *Kid A* and the group in their proper context, not just in rock history (the moment rock entered its post-rock phase) but also social and political history, with the imminent rise of broadband internet and the simmering millennial angst that, despite the damp apocalyptic squib of the Y2K bug, would come to feel morosely prophetic.

Looking extensively into the group's overall trajectory, and the existential despair that seemed to beset Thom Yorke with his growing success, which he was unable to enjoy, this is no dry or dully objective read. Hyden is an unabashed Radiohead fan, and there's a sense here of him channelling his youthful obsession with the group, evoking the mists of adoration while remaining clear-eyed and insightful. Hyden asks himself if he takes *Kid A* too seriously. Way too seriously, he responds, triumphantly. That's the spirit.

David Stubbs

Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band

Straight To You Live

MASCOT/PROVOGUE

Bluesman balances chaos and control.

You don't go to a Kenny Wayne Shepherd show to watch him climb the lighting rig. This pre-covid set from Germany's Rockpalast is light on banter and spectacle, but sky-high on performance; it's genuinely difficult to imagine a blues band playing better.

With a quarter-century catalogue and a horn section at his command, Shepherd takes his eye off the clock, letting *Diamonds & Gold* keep swinging, jamming *Shame Shame Shame* to nine minutes, and being so generous with his band that you wouldn't be surprised if he gave the cloakroom girl a solo.

Along the way, his virtuoso guitar playing shows welcome flashes of chaos. During the feral solo in *I Want You*, his fingers look set to pop out of the knuckles, while *Heat Of The Sun's* slow build from pin-drop to cyclone is a master class of attack and release.

Henry Yates

Decades: Pink Floyd In The 1970s

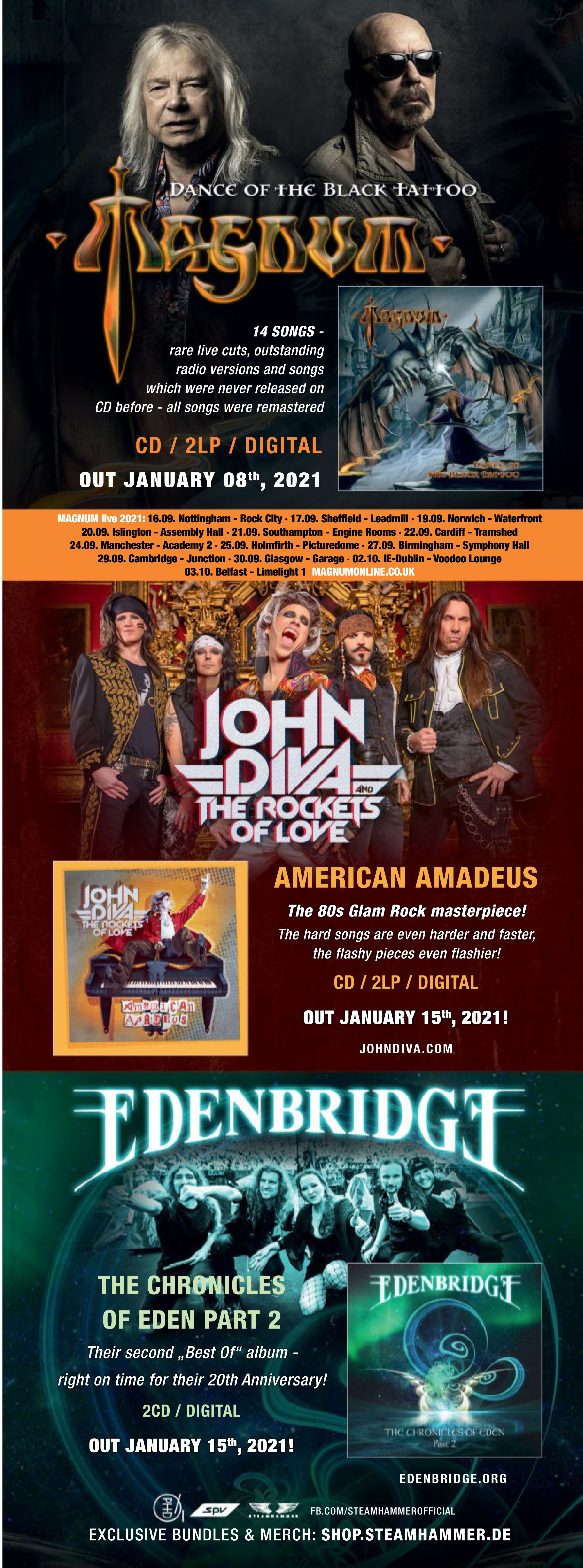
Georg Purvis SONICBOND

Stop me if you've heard this one before.

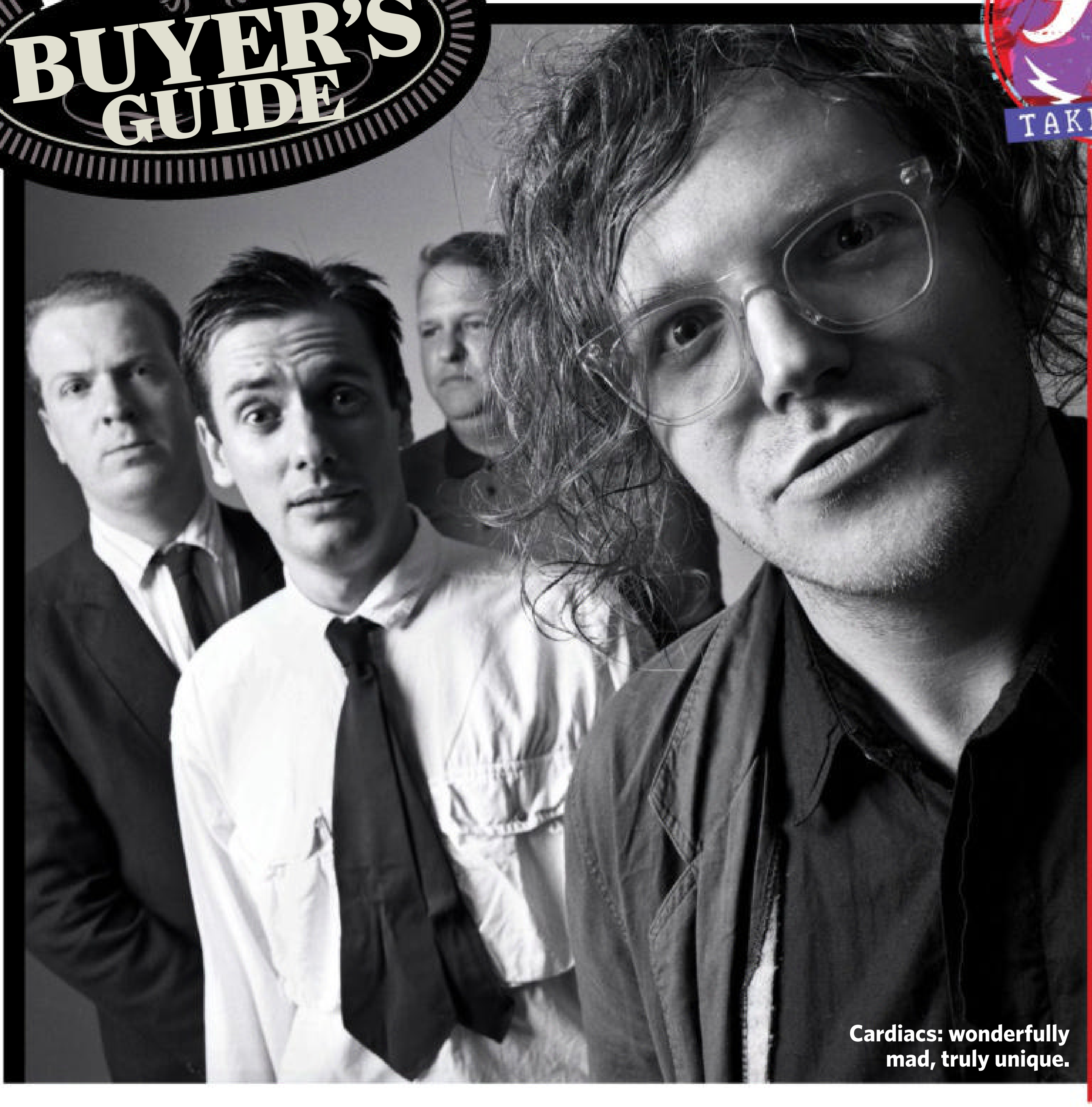
Apart from making it fit the '*Decades*' part of the title, it seems otherwise odd to cover just 70s Floyd. While that decade might indeed be "the peak of their success", it was given a run for its money by the successes of 1994's *The Division Bell* (platinum around the planet) and 1987's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason* (Top Five in at least 11 countries).

It's not difficult to write a book, even an interesting one, about Pink Floyd. It's a great story (in the right hands a page turner), and there's a wealth of already published material to consult and 'borrow' from. What's difficult is writing about the band and having something new to add to it. And in *Pink Floyd In The 1970s* Georg Purvis hasn't. Instead there's a regularly occurring feeling of: "I'm sure I've read that before." And if you're a Floyd fan and have read even one book about the band, then you very likely have.

Paul Henderson



THE HARD STUFF BUYER'S GUIDE



Cardiacs: wonderfully mad, truly unique.

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY

DAVE GROHL

I don't think you can explain the Cardiacs. Listen, I am new to this phenomenon. I just discovered them a month ago. Falling down a YouTube wormhole, and I just clicked on it for no reason and became entirely obsessed. If you grew up loving a band like Oingo Boingo… the Cardiacs are fucking insane. That mental obstacle course that is the challenge of playing music, this would be a double black diamond run on a ski resort. Their fucking songs are: "What?!" So you listen over and over and over and over, just to try to understand how they made it from that section to the next. And the lyrics are bananas, the different instrumentation… One of the things I love about them is that they didn't adhere to any of the other English trends. That's not some shoegaze shit right there. To me that's not Britpop. I don't know of many other bands that do what the Cardiacs did, and that's the perfect reason to love them. I read somewhere that they were huge influence on Blur, and I'm, like, well, you sure can't fucking hear it.

Cardiacs

Easy to hate, with their at times unfathomable music, but for fans of the weird and wonderful there was nothing else like them.

One mark of a truly great band is the ability to inspire overwhelming adoration. Very few bands really achieve it. But Cardiacs did. If you're a fan, there is a very high likelihood that Cardiacs are your absolute favourite band of all. On the other hand, their wild, intricate and gleefully deranged music might also make others want to run screaming from the room. They were that kind of band.

Formed in 1977 (initially as Cardiac Arrest) and led by the unparalleled wonky genius of the late, great Tim Smith, Cardiacs were the ultimate underground band: zealously supported and loved by their hard-core fan base, and completely ignored by everyone else. The music press absolutely loathed them, but that didn't stop Smith and his ragbag of eccentrics from building up a formidable reputation as a dazzling, life-affirming live band. Defying the notion that prog and punk were somehow incompatible, Cardiacs' music sounded like everything happening at once. An often frenzied eruption of mad ideas and skewed time signatures, it always arrived over-endowed with exquisite melodies and moments of spine-tingling grandeur.

After numerous DIY tape releases, Cardiacs' recorded legacy began in earnest with 1987's *Big Ship* EP, on which Smith's songwriting reached a new peak of bewildering efficacy. That was followed by a series of studio albums that meticulously forged an entirely new and enchanting musical world, where blistering aggression, lush harmonies, crackpot fairground music and all manner of warped prog and art-rock influences collided. From 1989's still startling *On Land And In The Sea* to the twinkling squall of *Guns* a decade later, Smith matched his band's on-stage prowess with records to cherish. Despite numerous pauses in activity and unexpected line-up changes along the way, Cardiacs never seemed to completely disappear from view, and were still touring right up until the winter of 2007.

A perfectionist but also a generous collaborator, Smith was supposedly working on a new Cardiacs album when he collapsed from a cardiopulmonary arrest on his way home in June 2008, and suffered brain damage as a result. He sadly passed away on July 21, 2020, a beloved genius with a much bigger (and utterly adoring) fan base than you might imagine. For the lucky few, Cardiacs will always be the greatest band that ever walked the earth.

Dom Lawson

Essential Classics

On Land And In The Sea

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1989

A magnificent creative peak from the classic six-piece Cardiacs line-up of the late 80s, *On Land And In The Sea* shines bright, kaleidoscopic light on Tim Smith's musical manifesto. From razor-sharp but fiendishly complex melodic gems like *Baby Heart Dirt, Mare's Nest* and *Fast Robert*, to the berserk prog-punk of *The Duck And Roger The Horse* and absurdly grandiose closing epic *The Everso Closely Guarded Line*, it's an unrelenting roller-coaster ride of melody, madness and joy.

Gently psychedelic and steeped in British eccentricity, *On Land And In The Sea* is Cardiacs' most affecting masterpiece.

Sing To God

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1996

Cardiacs fans are split on whether *Sing To God* or *On Land And In The Sea* is the band's greatest work. Both make a strong case, but there's no denying that the former is, at the very least, Tim Smith's magnum opus.

Recorded in 1995, it's an opulent, sprawling double album, and includes many of the best songs the band have ever done. Easily the biggest and best-sounding Cardiacs album, it veers from immaculate, quirky pop like *Manhoo* and *Bellyeye* to ferocious, skronky punk like *Fiery Gun Hand* and *Bell Clinks*, stopping off at towering psychedelic monolith *Dirty Boy* along the way.

Another masterpiece, then.

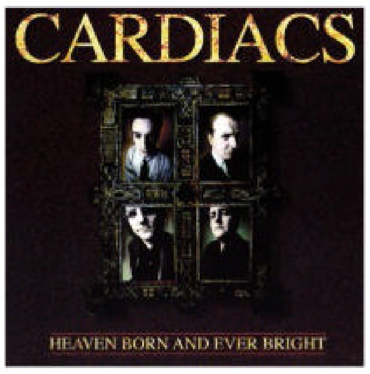
AVALON/PHOTOSHOT

Superior Reputation cementing

A Little Man And A House And The Whole World Window

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1988

The first legitimate Cardiacs studio album, *A Little Man And A House* spawned the closest thing the band ever got to a hit single: *Is This The Life*. Given an unexpected push by Radio 1, its relatively straightforward sound belied the crackpot brilliance of the album itself, on which Tim Smith's songwriting and nascent production skills collided in a shower of fairy dust. Both demented (the all-genres-at-once *R.E.S.*) and beautiful (the last minute of *The Breakfast Line* is simply jaw-dropping), this was a unique introduction to savour.



Heaven Born And Ever Bright

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1992

Preceded by irresistibly melodic single *Day Is Gone*, the third Cardiacs full-lengther showcased a new, four-man line-up and an ever-so-slightly refined approach from the ever-inventive Smith. Mostly comprising precise and exuberant singalongs like *For Good And All, She Is Hiding Behind The Shed* and *Anything I Can't Eat*, it also provided Cardiacs fans with their very own hymn: the impossibly stirring *The Alphabet Business Concern (Home Of Fadeless Splendour)*. Meanwhile, *Snakes-A-Sleeping* is swivel-eyed prog at its finest – although the final fade-out is absolutely not be trusted (spoiler: you will jump).

Big Ship

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1987

Technically not an album, but more than significant enough to warrant its inclusion here, *Big Ship* was the first 'proper' Cardiacs release, at a time when bands simply didn't sound like this. Not, of course, that they ever have.

Only a handful of songs deep but perfect in every way, it begins with the rousing pomp of its title track, rattles through the electrified prog-punk of *Tarred And Feathered*, and plunges into oddly reassuring melancholy for *Stoneage Dinosaurs* (later covered by Steven Wilson, no less).

You can find the whole thing on the compilation *Songs For Ships And Irons*, along with some more shiny non-album treats.

Guns

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1999

Although Tim Smith was reportedly not happy with the sound of *Guns*, Cardiacs' final studio album, it still sparkles and delights with tons of their customary cracked charm. Ignoring the fact that album opener *Spell With A Shell* is without doubt the finest song about a snail ever written, these are some of Smith's most beguiling creations. *There's Good Cud* sounds like a bomb going off in a clown-shoe factory; *Cry Wet Smile Dry* uses key changes as a weapon of wonder; *Jitterbug (Junior Is A)* is woozy, meandering and just plain weird. Smith even mastered reggae on *Wind And Rains Is Cold*, the clever sod.

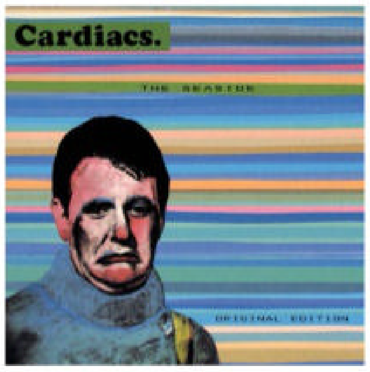
Good Worth exploring

The Special Garage Concerts Vol I & II

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN 2005

Not a studio album, but rather a sonically dazzling live set full of material that isn't included on Cardiacs' regular albums, *The Special Garage Concerts* was recorded over three nights at London's The Garage in the autumn of 2003, and proved to be Cardiacs' last grand gesture as a live band. Delving into their early material for an explosion of musical madness, a new line-up featuring guitarist Kavus Torabi brought Tim Smith's songs vividly to life in front of a hysterical audience of devotees, and joy was definitely unconfined.

Essential listening for the Cardiacs completist.



The Seaside

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1984

Cardiacs released a handful of tape-only albums during their first decade, and *The Seaside* was undoubtedly the pinnacle of that rise to compositional glory.

Although sonically primitive compared to later, 'proper' albums, there is something magical about this eruption of youthful imagination. Some of the band's most iconic songs are on this record, too, such as *Gina Lollobrigida, To Go Off And Things* (later covered by Napalm Death!) and early versions of *A Little Man A House, R.E.S.* and *Is This The Life*, all of which are all cherished cornerstones of Cardiacs' legacy.

There was a lot more happening in 1984 than Tina Turner and U2, you know.

Archive Cardiacs

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1989

A collection of material from Cardiacs' first two DIY releases *The Obvious Identity* (1980) and *Toy World* (1981), *Archive Cardiacs* might not be a proper studio album but it does collect the best of the band's first decade of artful perversity. The sumptuous arrangements of later albums are absent, but it's plain from the ingenious, explosive likes of *Piffol Four Times* and *As Cold As Can Be In An English Sea* that Cardiacs' defiant blending of prog, punk and psychedelia was a brilliant idea from the start. Even the somewhat reedy, DIY production values add an extra layer of charm to the whole mad affair. It's the sound of genius getting warmed up.

Avoid

Rude Bootleg

THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN, 1986

Something has to fill this 'Avoid' slot, despite the fact that Cardiacs never released anything that wasn't considerably better than everything else. But of the band's numerous live albums, *Rude Bootleg* is the least easy-on-the-ear.

Recorded at the Reading Rock Festival in August 1986, it's a decent snapshot of a band hitting their stride, but if you want the full Cardiacs live experience you're better off with later releases such as *Cardiacs Live* and *All That Glitters Is A Mare's Nest* are a much better bet. That said, *Rude Bootleg* does feature a rare live version of the glorious *The Whole World Window*. So don't *actually* avoid it.

Essential Playlist

To Go Off And Things
The Seaside

Big Ship
Big Ship EP

Is This The Life
A Little Man And House And The Whole World Window

The Breakfast Line
A Little Man...

R.E.S.
A Little Man...

There's Too Many Irons In The Fire
Songs For Ships And Irons

Baby Heart Dirt
On Land And In The Sea

The Duck And Roger The Horse
On Land And In The Sea

The Everso Closely Guarded Line
On Land And In The Sea

Day Is Gone
Heaven Born And Ever Bright

Anything I Can't Eat
Heaven Born And Ever Bright

Dog-Like Sparky
Sing To God

Dirty Boy
Sing To God

Signs
Guns

Cry Wet Smile Dry
Guns

Ditzy Scene
Single

Vermin Mangle
Single

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Tour Dates

BRYAN ADAMS

Bristol	City Centre	Jun 26
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 27
Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jul 1
Widnes	Halton Stadium	Jul 2
Telford	QEII Arena	Jul 3
Cornwall	Eden Project	Jul 5
Powderham	Castle	Jul 6
Canterbury	Spitfire Ground	Jul 8
Cornbury	Music Festival	Jul 9
Leeds	Harewood House	Jul 10

AEROSMITH, RIVAL SONS

London	O2 Arena	Jun 23
Manchester	Arena	Jun 29

THE ALLMAN BETTS BAND

Cardiff	Globe	May 7
London	Highbury Garage	May 8
Manchester	Academy	May 9
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	May 11

BAD TOUCH, PISTON

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 7
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 8
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 9
Dundee	Beat Generator	Apr 10
Manchester	Bread Shed	Apr 12
Leeds	Key Club	Apr 13
London	Islington Academy 2	Apr 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 15
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 16
Gravesend	Red Lion	Apr 17
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 18
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Apr 19
Newport	The Patriot	Apr 20
Exeter	The Tavern	Apr 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 23

RUSS BALLARD

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 21

MARTIN BARRE BAND

Wakefield	Warehouse 23	May 29
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	May 30
York	The Crescent	Jun 3
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Jun 5
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 6
Hull	O'Rileys	Jun 11
Crickhowell	Clarence Hall	Jun 11

BAUHAUS

London	Alexandra Palace	Jun 3

JEFF BECK (2022)

Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 27
Sheffield	City Hall	May 29
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 30, 31
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 2
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 3
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 4
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 6
York	Barbican	Jun 7

BIFFY CLYRO

Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Apr 11
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 12
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 15
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 16
Bristol	Academy	Apr 17

BLACK DEER FESTIVAL
SAVING GRACE FEATURING ROBERT PLANT & SUZI DIAN, WILKO, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 18-20

BLACK FOXXES

Exeter	Cavern	Mar 2
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Mar 3
Sheffield	Academy 2	Mar 4
Liverpool	Arts Club	Mar 6
Edinburgh	Mash House	Mar 7
York	Fulford Arms	Mar 8
Hull	Adelphi	Mar 9
Leicester	Academy 2	Mar 11
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 12
St Albans	The Horn	Mar 14
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Mar 15
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Mar 15
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Mar 17

BLACKWATER CONSPIRACY, THESE WICKED RIVERS

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 13
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 17, 30
Cleethorpes	Rock Festival	Apr 18
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 22
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Apr 23
Carlisle	Brickyard	Apr 24
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 25
Stoke-On-Trent	Eleven	Apr 27
Birmingham	Academy 3	Apr 28
Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 29
Sheffield	Heretic Festival	May 1
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 2
Leicester	The Musician	May 4
London	Islington Academy 2	May 6
Newport	The Patriot	May 7
Gravesend	Red Lion	May 8

BROKEN WITT REBELS

Leicester	Academy 2	Apr 1
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 8
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Apr 9
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 10
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Apr 15
Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 16
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 17
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 22
Brighton	Green Door Store	Apr 23
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 30
Exeter	Cavern Club	May 5
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	May 6

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Birmingham	Institute	May 10
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 11
Cambridge	Junction	May 13
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 14
Leeds	Academy	May 16
Manchester	Albert Hall	May 17

CATS IN SPACE, VAMBO

Lancaster	Grand Theatre	Feb 13
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 23
Birmingham	Institute 2	Feb 25
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 26
Hexham	Queens Hall	Feb 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 4
Reading	Sub 89	Mar 5
Wimborne	Tivoli	Mar 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 11
Great Yarmouth	HRH Festival	Mar 12
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 13
Norwich	Epic Studios	Mar 17
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 19

Recommended

CHEAP TRICK

Bristol	Academy	Apr 9
Manchester	Academy	Apr 10
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 15

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

CHELSEA BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
CHRIS FARLOWE, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, MORE

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 13

ERIC CLAPTON

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 14, 15, 17, 18

CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS & FRIENDS, THE BLOCKHEADS, MORE

Cleethorpes	Beachcomber	Mar 6

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY

Dublin	Academy	Apr 24
Belfast	Limelight 2	Apr 25
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Apr 28
Southampton	Engine Rooms	May 21
Birmingham	Institute 2	May 22

COUNTRY TO COUNTRY FESTIVAL
ERIC CHURCH, DARIUS RUCKER, LUKE COMBS, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Mar 12-14
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 12-14
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 12-14

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

Sale	Waterside Arts	May 27
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 28
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Jun 3
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jun 4
Leeds	City Varieties	Jun 10
Lowestoft	Marina Theatre	Jun 11
Tewkesbury	Roses Theatre	Jun 12

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BRYAN ADAMS

He's not a kid any more, but he still wants to rock. Easy when you've got *Run To You*, *Somebody* and plenty more belters.

See left for dates. Currently June 26 to July 10

CROW BLACK CHICKEN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 9
Sheffield	HRH Blues Festival	Apr 11
Kinross	Green Hotel	Apr 15

THE DAMNED

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 9, 10
Birmingham	Academy	Jul 16
Glasgow	Academy	July 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 18

DIAMOND HEAD, ROCK GODDESS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 22
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 23
Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 24
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 25
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 30
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 5
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 8

REBECCA DOWNES, MOJO PREACHERS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 25

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
KISS, MEGADETH, BIFFY CLYRO, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 4-6

DREAM EVIL

London	Camden Underworld	Mar 14

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS, JERRY JOSEPH

Leeds	Stylus	May 29
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 30
Glasgow	SWG3 Studio	Jun 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 2
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 3

ENSLAVED, INTRONAUT, OBSIDIAN KINGDOM, CROWN

Birmingham	Institute 2	May 12
Glasgow	Slay	May 13
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 14
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	May 15

EPICA, APOCALYPTICA, WHEEL

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 16
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Bristol	Academy	Apr 18
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Apr 27
Manchester	Academy	Apr 28

ESOTERICA

Bournemouth	The Anvil	Apr 1
Birmingham	Actress & Bishop	Apr 2
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 3
London	Camden Black Heart	Apr 9
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 10

FAITH NO MORE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7, 8
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 9
Birmingham	Academy	Jun 11
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 12, 13

SAMANTHA FISH

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Mar 15
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Mar 16
Bath	Komedia	Mar 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 19
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 20
Manchester	Academy	Mar 21

THE FLAMING LIPS

Galway	Big Top	Jul 17
Liverpool	Invisible Wind Factory	Jul 19
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Jul 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Jul 25

FM

Hull	The Welly	Apr 2
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Apr 3
Nantwich	Civic Hall	Apr 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Apr 4
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 10
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 16
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 17
Newcastle	University	Apr 23
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 1
Reading	Sub 89	May 2

ERIC GALES, DANNY BRYANT (2022)

Dover	Booking Hall	Feb 16
London	Islington Academy	Feb 17
Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 18
Southampton	1865	Feb 19
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Feb 20
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 22
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 23
Manchester	Academy 3	Feb 24
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 25
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Feb 26
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 27

GONG

Colchester	Arts Centre	May 3
Norwich	Arts Centre	May 4
Brighton	Komedia	May 5
Reading	Sub 89	May 6
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	May 7
Bristol	Thekla	May 9
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 10
Southampton	1865	May 11
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	May 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 13
York	Crescent	May 14
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	May 15
Manchester	Gorilla	May 16
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	May 17
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 19
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 20
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	May 21
Hitchin	Club 85	May 22
Ramsgate	Music Room	May 27
London	Ladbroke Grove Subterania	May 28

GREEN DAY

London	London Stadium	Jun 25
Huddersfield	John Smiths Stadium	Jun 26
Glasgow	Green	Jun 28
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 30

GUN

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Sep 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 14
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 15
Manchester	Night People	Sep 16
Keighley	Studio 5 Live	Sep 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 18

GUNS N' ROSES

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 18, 19
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 24

HAMMERFEST
LORDI, RAGING SPEEDHORN, VENOM INC, MORE

Birmingham	Academy	Feb 13, 14

HARD ROCK HELL NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK
MASSIVE WAGONS, BAD TOUCH, MASSIVE, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Jan 23, 24

HARD ROCK HELL PSYCH
ØRESUND SPACE COLLECTIVE, GORILLA, ELECTRIC MOON, MORE

Liverpool	Psych Club	Apr 17, 18

HARD ROCK HELL SPRING BREAK
KINGDOM COME, MADAM X, AUTOGRAPH, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Mar 10-14

HAWKLORDS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 1
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	Apr 2
Leeds	HRH Prog Festival	Apr 3
Hull	Adelphi	Apr 4
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 8
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Apr 9
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 10
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 11
Norwich	Brickmakers	Apr 13
Leicester	The Musician	Apr 15
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 16
Hitchin	Club 85	Apr 17
Brighton	Komedia	Apr 18
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 21
Southampton	1865	Apr 22
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Apr 23
Swansea	Hangar 18	Apr 24
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Apr25

HELLOWEEN, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Manchester	Academy	May 22
London	Brixton Academy	May 23

HERETIC FEST
INGLORIOUS, AARON BUCHANAN, RAVENEYE, MORE

Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 30-May 2

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES, KILLING JOKE

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Aug 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Aug 6
Glasgow	Hydro	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 9

INGLORIOUS, MERCUTIO

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Apr 22
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 23
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Apr 24
Plymouth	Junction	Apr 25
Gloucester	Guildhall	Apr 27
Bristol	Thekla	Apr 28
Sheffield	Heretic Fest	Apr 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 1
Bradford	Nightrain	May 2
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 4
Newcastle	Riverside	May 5
Manchester	Academy	May 6
Buckley	Tivoli	May 7
Liverpool	Arts Loft	May 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	Rock City	May 11
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	May 12
Birmingham	The Asylum	May 14
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	May 15
Norwich	Waterfront	May 16
Brighton	Chalk	May 18
London	Malet Street ULU	May 19

WILKO JOHNSON

Portsmouth	New Theatre Royal	Feb 4
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Feb 5
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Feb 6
Glasgow	Saint Luke's Church	Feb 10
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Feb 11
Manchester	RNCM	Feb 12
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 19
Nottingham	Albert Hall	Feb 20
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Feb 21

New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 25
Bury St Edmunds	Apex Arts Centre	Feb 26
Bexhill	De Le Warr Pavilion	Feb 27
Poole	Lighthouse	Feb 23
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Apr 24
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Apr 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 30

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Aberdeen	Drummonds	May 2
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 4
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 5
Nottingham	Bodega	May 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 11
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	May 12

KINGDOM OF MADNESS FEATURING TONY MARTIN

Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 10
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 11
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	May 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 26
Havant	Spring Arts Centre	May 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 1
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 2
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Apr 3
Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 4
Swindon	Level III	Apr 9
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 11
Leicester	Y Theatre	Apr 23
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Apr 24
Wolverhampton	Newhampton Arts Centre	Apr 30
Bradford	Nightrain	May 1

KING KING, CATS IN SPACE, FIRED UP

Chepstow	Castle	May 1

Recommended

LARKIN POE

Dublin	Vicar Street	Feb 3
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Feb 4
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 5
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 6
Bristol	SWX	Feb 8
Oxford	Academy	Feb 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 11

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

LEEDS BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
DR FEELGOOD, KRIS BARRAS, FÉLIX RABIN, MORE

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 9

LINCOLN BLUES FESTIVAL
DR FEELGOOD, KRIS BARRAS, BIG DADDY WILSON, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 8

LOOE BLUES FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, MARTIN TURNER, CHANTEL McGREGOR, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Mar 19-21

LONDON ROCKS
KEN PULSTENIK'S GROUNDHOGS, JOHN VERITY BAND, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 21

ERJA LYTTINEN (2022)

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 4
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 5
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 6
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 8
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 9
Kinross	Green Hotel	Feb 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 11
Liverpool	Phase 1	Feb 12

MAN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 30
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 1
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Oct 1

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 16, 17

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 13
Guildford	G Live	Apr 14
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Apr 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 19
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 22
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 24

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

ERIC GALES

He's one of the most engaging and charismatic blues performers around, with a pocketful of cracking tunes.

See previous page for dates. Currently February 6-2, 2022.

KEVIN NIXON

Brighton	Dome	Apr 26
Bath	Forum	Apr 27
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 29
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 30
Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic	May 3
York	Barbican	May 4
Newcastle	City Hall	May 5
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 7
Manchester	Apollo	May 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 9

MASSIVE WAGONS

Glasgow	Garage	Mar 11
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 12
London	Islington Academy	Mar 13
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 16
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Mar 18
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 19
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Mar 20
Cardiff	The Globe	Mar 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 24
Exeter	Cavern Club	Mar 25
Newcastle	Riverside	Mar 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 28

MAYHEM, MORTIIS

Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 23
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 24
Dublin	Academy	Mar 25
Glasgow	Slay	Mar 26
Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 27
London	Islington Academy	Mar 28

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 7
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Jan 8
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	Jan 9
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jan 10
Chester	Live Rooms	Jan 22
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Jan 23
Stamford	Mama Liz's	Jan 29
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 12
Keighley	The Studio	Feb 13
Looe	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	Mar 20
Tavistock	The Wharf	Mar 21
Southampton	1865	Mar 22
Doncaster	The Leopard	Apr 1
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 2
Hull	New Adelphi	Apr 10
Ruislip	Tropic	Apr 16
Cleethorpes	Beachcomber	Apr 18
Bilston	Robin 2	May 27
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 28
Worthing	The Factory	May 29

PAT McMANUS BAND

Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Mar 5
Hitchin	Club 85	Mar 6
Sutton In Ashfield	The Diamond	Mar 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 11
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 13
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 14
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Mar 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 19
Cymmer	Rhondda Hotel	Mar 20

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

London	Camden Jazz Café	Mar 29

NHS THANKYOU CONCERT
THE WILDHEARTS, BIG COUNTRY, THE BREW, MORE

Cleethorpes	Meridian Park	Jul 31

NIGHTWISH, AMORPHIS, TURMION KÄTILÖT

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 1
London	Wembley Arena	May 2

THE NIMMO BROTHERS

Clitheroe	The Grand	Jul 13
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Jul 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Jul 15

PARADISE LOST

Leeds	Warehouse	May 1

PARTY AT THE PARK
KAISER CHIEFS, GUN, ASH, MORE

Perth	Lesser South Inch Park	Jun 26, 27

PEARL JAM

London	British Summer Time Festival	Jul 9, 10
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 27
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 28

STEPHEN DALE PETIT

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 5

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS, PAULINE MURRAY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 28
Bristol	Academy	Apr 29
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 1
Liverpool	Academy	May 2
Manchester	Academy 2	May 3
Cambridge	Junction	May 5

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	O2 Arena	Jun 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20
Manchester	Arena	Jun 10, 11
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 13, 14

RADAR FESTIVAL
DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, INTERVALS, MORE

Guildford	Guildford Park	Jul 30, 31

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
CLUTCH, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOGHAT, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 16-18

RAMMSTEIN

Belfast	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Jun 12
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 16
Coventry	Ricoh Arena	Jun 19

READING/LEEDS FESTIVAL
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, LIAM GALLAGHER, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 27-29
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 27-29

REDD KROSS

Brighton	The Albert	May 3
Bristol	The Exchange	May 4

Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 6
Glasgow	Broadcast	May 7
London	Islington The Lexington	May 9, 10

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 4
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jun 5
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Jun 6
Winchester	The Railway	Jun 11
Horsham	REC Rooms	Jun 12

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS, MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 29-31

ROCK AT THE BAY
SON OF MAN, BUCK & EVANS, BUFFALO SUMMER, MORE

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jun 5

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER, SWEET CRISIS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 18
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 20
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 25
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 26
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 27
London	Highbury Garage	Apr 10

ROSE TATTOO

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jul 19
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 21
Musselburgh	Brunton	Aug 27
Dunfermline	Alhambra	Aug 28
Durham	Gala Theatre	Aug 29
Sale	Waterside Arts Centre	Sep 2
Winchester	Theatre Royal	Sep 5

JOE SATRIANI

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	May 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 2
London	Palladium	May 4
Gateshead	The Sage	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 6

SAXON

London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 1
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 2
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 6
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 7
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Apr 9
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 10
Nottingham	Glee Club	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Apr 13
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Apr 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Apr 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 16

SKUNK ANANSIE

Cardiff	University	Jun 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 8
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Jun 9
Newcastle	Academy	Jun 11
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 13
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jun 14
Norwich	UEA	Jun 15
London	Meltdown Festival	Jun 17
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 18
Birmingham	Academy 1	Jun 19
Brighton	Dome	Jun 21
Guildford	G Live	Jun 22
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Jun 23
Leeds	Academy	Jun 25
Bristol	Academy	Jun 26
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Jun 29
Leicester	Academy	Jun 30
London	Brixton Academy	Jul 2

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL
SUM 41, NOFX, PENNYWISE, MORE

Leeds	Temple Newsam Park	May 29
Hatfield	Hatfield Park	May 30

SOS FESTIVAL
MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, PISTON, HANDS OFF GRETEL, MORE

Prestwich	Longfield Suite	Jul 2-4

SPARKS

Manchester	Albert Hall	May 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 21
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 23
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 25
Belfast	Limelight Club	May 26
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 28

SCOTT STAPP (2022)

Leeds	Warehouse	Feb 10

Birmingham	The Mill	Feb 11
London	Islington Academy	Feb 12

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
ANTHRAX, THERAPY?, TOM KEIFER, H.E.A.T, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 23-25

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS,
THE PROFESSIONALS, TV SMITH

Bristol	Academy	Mar 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 5
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 6
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Mar 8
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 10
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 12
Leeds	Academy	Mar 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 14
Troon	Concert Hall	Mar 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 17
Manchester	Academy	Mar 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 20

THE STRUTS (UNPLUGGED)

Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 1
Leeds	Wardrobe	Mar 2
Kingston-upon-Thames	Pryzm	Mar 3
Southampton	1896	Mar 4

GEOFF TATE

Belfast	Limelight	Apr 23
Dublin	Lost Lane	Apr 24
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 27
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 29
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 30
Inverness	Mad Hatters	May 3
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	May 5
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 7
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 9
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 13
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	May 14
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 15

THERAPY?

Brighton	Concorde 2	May 5
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	May 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 7
Manchester	The Ritz	May 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 11
Bristol	SWX	May 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 14
Nottingham	Rock City	May 15
Cambridge	Junction	May 17
Newcastle	Riverside	May 26
Glasgow	Garage	May 27
Hull	The Welly	May 28
Norwich	Waterfront	May 29

GEORGE THOROGOOD

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jul 23
London	Shepherds Bush Empire	Jul 25
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jul 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jul 28
York	Barbican	Jul 30
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Jul 31
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Aug 1

THUNDER, UGLY KID JOE

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 13
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 14
London	Wembley Arena	May 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 23

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Cardiff	The Globe	Jan 22
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Jan 23
Newcastle	The Cluny	Jan 27
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 29
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Feb 11
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Feb 12
Dartmouth	Flavel Arts Centre	Feb 14
Selby	Town Hall	Feb 25
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 5
Cornwall	Tencreek Holiday Park	Mar 20
Havant	Spring Arts & Heritage Centre	Apr 9
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 16
Hessle	Town Hall	Apr 23
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Apr 24
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Apr 29

JUDIE TZUKE

Penzance	The Acorn	Apr 9
Torrington	Plough Arts Centre	Apr 10
Havant	Spring Arts & Heritage	Apr 15
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 16
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Apr 17
Middlesbrough	Town Hall	Apr 21
Selby	Town Hall	Apr 22
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Apr 23
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	May 8

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

WILKO JOHNSON

Having looked death in the eye and faced it down, the former Dr Feelgood guitarist is still belting out hip-swivelling R&B.

See previous page for dates. Currently February 4 to April 30.

Bury	The Met	May 13
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 14
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	May 22
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Jun 19
Barton upon Humber	The Ropewalk	Jun 25
Otley	Courthouse	Jun 26

Recommended

URIAH HEEP

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 29
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 30
London	Palladium	Oct 3
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 4
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 5
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 6

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS, VIRGINMARYS

Cambridge	Junction	Apr 28
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 29
Bedford	Esquires	Apr 30
Swansea	Sound Bay Festival	May 1
London	Islington Academy	May 2
Newcastle	University Students Union	May 4
Glasgow	Garage G2	May 5
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 6
Manchester	Club Academy	May 7
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 8
Buckley	Tivoli	May 9
Reading	Sub 89	May 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 14, 15
Leeds	Warehouse	May 16
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 19
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 20
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 21

BILLY WALTON BAND

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 16

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 31
Birmingham	Arena	Apr 1
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 3
Brighton	Centre	Apr 5
Bournemouth	International Centre	Apr 6, 7
Manchester	Arena	Apr 9
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 10
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 11
Hull	Bonus Arena	Apr 13
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Apr 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Apr 15
London	O2 Arena	Apr 17

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	May 22

THE WHITE BUFFALO, LA EDWARDS

Bristol	Academy	Apr 19
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 22
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 23

Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 24
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 26
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 27

THE WHO

Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 3
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Mar 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 10
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Mar 12
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 15
Birmingham	RWA	Mar 17
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 22
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 27
Manchester	Arena Mar 29	

STEVEN WILSON

Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 8
Sheffield	City Hall	Sep 9
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 11
Glasgow	Concert Hall	Sep 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 13
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Sep 15
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 17

WISHBONE ASH

Gateshead	The Sage	Jan 26
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion Theatre	Jan 27
Bristol	St George's Hall	Jan 28
Honiton	The Beehive	Nov 13
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 14
London	Islington Academy	Nov 18

XENTRIX

London	Camden Underworld	Apr 29

YES

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 16
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 17
York	Barbican	May 19
Gateshead	The Sage	May 20
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 22
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	May 23
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 24
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 28

YOU ME AT SIX

Glasgow	Barrowland	May 19
Bristol	Academy	May 20
Manchester	Academy	May 21
Newcastle	Academy	May 23
Birmingham	Institute	May 24
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 25

MIKE ZITO

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 13

THE ZOMBIES

Harpenden	Public Halls	Feb 11, 12
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 13, 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 16
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Feb 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 19
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 20
Bristol	The Fleece	Feb 25
Exmouth	Pavilion	Feb 26
Ystradgynlais	The Welfare	Feb 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 4
Wimborne	Minster Tivoli Theatre	Mar 5

KEVIN NIXON

'There lurks a palpable melodicism beneath their relentless onslaught.'

Architects

London Royal Albert Hall

Machine-gun riffs and bleeding passion strafe with precision.

★ Even this far down the line in a career spanning eight studio albums over 14 years, there are those still struggling to define Architects' music. Is it metalcore? Math metal? Something else? Which is all a bit of a waste of time when what they really are is intense. And tonight they ramp up that intensity to searing levels.

Having risen from their Brighton origins to sell out such prestigious venues in the capital as the 10,000-capacity Alexandra Palace, tonight the quintet notch up another milestone with this performance in the sumptuous environs of the Royal Albert Hall.

With the esteemed venue devoid of the moshers and headbangers usually at the heart of their shows, Architects go that extra mile. Opener *Nihilist* finds singer Sam Carter promenading his own gig from the arena floor as he alternates easily from tortured screams to guttural growls. But it's with the new material from their forthcoming ninth album, *For Those That Wish To Exist*, that Architects linger. As evidenced by *Discourse Is Dead*, *Animals* and *Doomsday*, there lurks an increasingly subtle yet palpable melodicism beneath their relentless onslaught.

An overwhelming experience of blistering noise, cathartic screaming and raw emotion, Architects go some way to revealing what working in the Home Office must really be like.

Julian Marszalek

Metalcore? Math rock? Whatever you call Architects' music, it works.

Cats In Space

Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill

The pomp-rockers have still got seven lives left.

★ Streamed on the same day that Cats In Space unveil their fourth album, *Atlantis*, this ticketed, full-production show serves as a warm welcome to the band's third lead singer, Damien Edwards. If the speedy exit of Mark Pascall presented cause for concern, then just like the quality revealed on *Atlantis*, the newbie's performance behind closed doors in Wolverhampton eradicates doubt of any kind. He was apparently born to deliver the sextet's nostalgic catnip for the human ear.

Edwards is equally at home on the Sweet-flavoured bubblegum anthem *Revolution* as he is on the slower, more intricate schmaltz of *I Fell Out Of Love With Rock 'N' Roll*. Oddly, however, despite the significance of the day, Cats In Space don't thrust wave after wave of brand new material upon us.

Instead they purr through the more established likes of *How Many Gods*, *Hologram Man* and *Scars*, and allow Edwards to flex the full range of his tonsils on an exquisite *The Greatest Story Never Told*.

The presence of a live audience is glaringly missed, never more so than when the set proper ends awkwardly with *Revolution*, but it's hard not to smile when the director cuts to footage of cheering fans in their living rooms demanding a funk-tinged, glitterball-tastic encore of *Thunder In The Night*.

Cats In Space are dead… long live the Cats.

Dave Ling

Volbeat

Live From Cologne

Volbeat light up the Lanxess Arena (shot in 2019).

★ These Danes are so comfortable in front of this huge audience, part of the *Rewind, Replay, Rebound* tour, as they blaze through their 22-song performance. From opener *Leviathan* to main set closer *Last Day Under The Sun* (both from the aforementioned *Rewind* album), the band scarcely interrupt the rhythmic flow of their irrepressible rock'n'roll. Even when the pace is slowed for something like *When We Were Kids*, the intensity never lets up.

There are notable moments where the stakes are raised to enticing highs. It happens, for example, when frontman Michael Poulsen exhorts everyone to channel the spirit of Johnny Cash for a brief singalong snippet from *Ring Of Fire*. It happens again when Danko Jones joins the guys for *Black Rose*, and a later peak comes with the arrival of ZZ Bottom, a fine ZZ Top tribute act roped in for *Die To Live*.

But what makes this set so captivating overall is the way Volbeat and the audience interact. You can feel that the men on stage are feeding off the near-hysteria out front.

Festivities conclude with a funked up *Still Counting*, as a huge mass of black balloons and confetti engulf stage and arena. At one point, Poulsen says: "We bring the noise to you, you bring it back." It's the best summary anyone could give of this occasion.

Malcolm Dome

The Dirty Knobs

Los Angeles The Troubadour

Former Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers man launches his new band's album.

★ It's billed as a launch party for The Dirty Knobs' debut, *Wreckless Abandon*, but Mike Campbell begins with a howling bottleneck solo on his Stratocaster before launching into The Animals' *I'm Crying*, which is not on the album. Indeed, he stresses first that tonight is a benefit for America's NIVA (National Independent Venue Association) emergency relief fund.

By the end of the one-hour set they will have played just over half the album – starting with *Southern Boy* (on a cream Gibson Firebird bearing a Johnny Winter signature), and ending with the wham-bam pairing of *Sugar* and *Loaded Gun*. But as effortlessly as they rock, The Dirty Knobs show their class when they're being different. For the funny, moody *Fuck That Guy* Campbell concentrates on the verses while fellow guitarist Jason Sinay plays lead. On *Irish Girl*, Campbell's 12-string acoustic makes the song sound so beautiful that it could be Van Morrison doing Dylan.

There are three more covers: "A deep track from the Heartbreakers cellar", meaning *Between Two Worlds* (from 1982 *Long After Dark*); JJ Cale's *Humdinger*; and "a song I wrote with my brother Tom". It's *Refugee*, but slowed to a walking pace, a semi-acoustic country blues tear-jerker, and its delivery is, like the frontman himself, endearingly casual and laconically cool.

Neil Jeffries

ED MASON

TOGETHER WE'RE
LOUDER
LOUDERSOUND.COM
ROCK
HAMMER
PROG
BLUES

‘AIC celebrate their colossal contribution to alternative rock.’

MoPOP Founders Award 2020 Honouring Alice In Chains

Seattle Museum Of Pop Culture

All-star celebration of the grunge legends on their 30th anniversary.

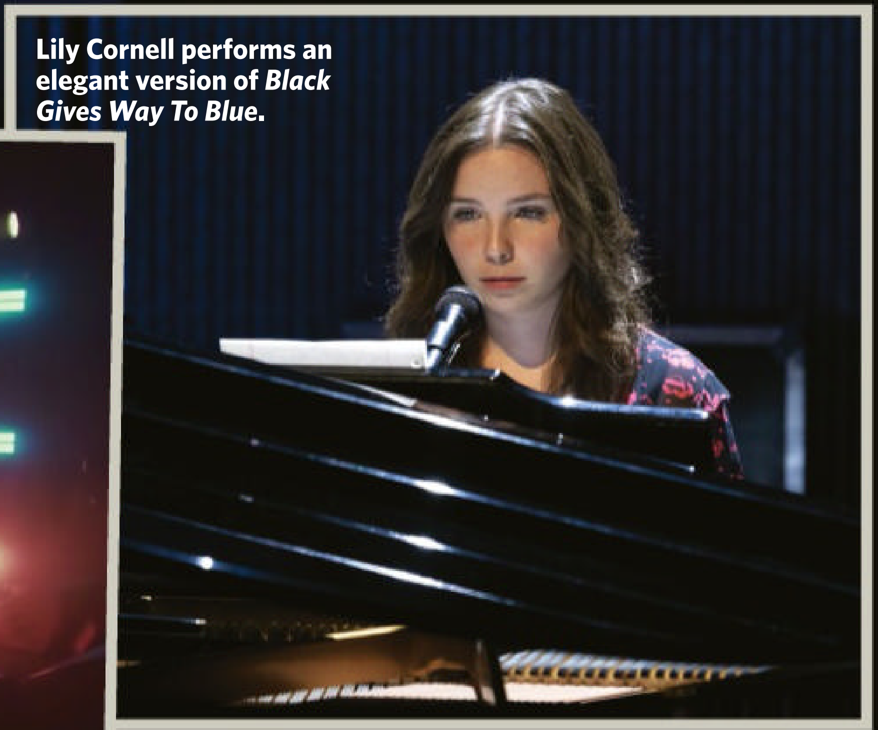
★ The Museum of Pop Culture in Seattle is an architecturally stunning non-profit museum and creative hub set up by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. It has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, so this hometown tribute to Alice In Chains doubles up as a modern-day telethon (the band cooing over Jimi Hendrix's guitar, goofing around with treasures swiped from horror movies and playing with the studio equipment to encourage donations from viewers).

As honourees, they're met with a parade of familiar faces doffing their caps and sharing their memories, from Eddie Vedder and Tom Morello to Sammy Hagar and, incongruously, Robert Downey Jr. But, on the 30th anniversary of their magnificent debut album *Facelift*, it's the many, many musical tributes that pack a punch. A fiery *Man In The Box* from Slipknot's Corey Taylor, Foo Fighters' Taylor Hawkins and Jane's Addiction's Dave Navarro and Chris Chaney has a surprisingly fun edge; Ann Wilson delivers a powerhouse *Rooster*; Korn rough up *Would?*, while Metallica tackle the same song via Zoom; Fishbone bring a sense of joy to *Them Bones* by blasting it with brass; and Mastodon perform a shudderingly heavy *Again*.

There's beauty as well as bluster, with Danish alt.country musician Maggie Bjorkland's heart-rendingly mournful pedal steel cosying up to Mark Lanegan's world-weary voice for *Nutshell*. It's backed with footage of Alice In Chains as young men in the 90s, led by Layne Staley, when they first took on the world, so it's fitting that the future generation get their moment to shine too. Full of bright ideas, competitors from MoPop's Soundoff! contest for young musicians take on Alice classics and make them their own, from the jazz-meets-noise of The Human Missile Crisis to Talaya's soulful take on *All I Am*. Most touching of all, though, is the live debut of Lily Cornell Silver, the daughter of Chris Cornell and AIC's manager Susan Silver. Her elegant take on *Black Gives Way To Blue* while seated at a grand piano would surely soften the hardest heart.

As awards are presented to the current band members as well as the families of Staley and Mike Starr, it's a chance for the band to reflect on their fallen comrades and celebrate their colossal contribution to alternative rock.

Emma Johnston



Lily Cornell performs an elegant version of *Black Gives Way To Blue*.

Dave Navarro, Chris Chaney, Taylor Hawkins and Corey Taylor deliver a fiery *Man In The Box*.

Alice In Chains: playing music and receiving tributes.

Fishbone blast *Them Bones* with brass.

Blackberry Smoke

Atlanta Tabernacle Theatre

Southern-fried livestream.

★ If Blackberry Smoke have been beaten down by 2020, you'd never know it from this performance. Perhaps it helps that it's their fourth livestream this year, and that they're back on home turf, playing their eighth annual Holiday Homecoming show in Atlanta's ornate Tabernacle Theatre – this time, without an audience.

Tonight they play their 2012 album *The Whippoorwill* in full alongside other songs, taking the show to nearly two hours but it flies by. Led by the wryly funny Charlie Starr, whose full-throated drawl doesn't falter, the five core band members are joined by guitarist Benji Shanks, percussionist Preston Holcomb, and two glorious-voiced backing singers whose supercharged enthusiasm is infectious. And no wonder: it's hard *not* to have your spirits raised by Blackberry Smoke's boogie-based, southern-rooted rock'n'roll.

Blackberry Smoke don't just go through the motions; they shake things up and have fun too, whether they're weaving snippets of Tom Petty and Van Halen tunes into their own songs or bringing in a sax and trumpet duo to spice up the extended funk of *Believe You Me*. There's no showboating, no unnecessary showing off, their stellar musicianship is delivered with ease, all the members exuding effortless cool and looking the part with shaggy manes and beards, 70s-style threads and even a couple of pairs of shades. Blackberry Smoke make livestreaming look easy.

Hannah May Kilroy

Fish

Aberdeen The Lemon Tree

A Fish In The Lemon Tree audio stream captures covid-scuppered *Weltschmerz* tour.

★ A bit of a poignant gig, this. A warm up in March for what should have been the beginning of Fish's touring activity throughout 2020, it's ended up being the only show he's performed this year, before the pandemic scuppered everything. It's available now for free via Soundcloud and YouTube, and the option is there to donate via JustGiving to support Fish's presently unemployed band and crew.

Sounding a bit rough and grizzled around the edges, Fish is nevertheless on good form here, working through a set built around latest album *Weltschmerz*, and including a couple of tunes from Marillion's *Script For A Jester's Tear*. According to Fish's own notes, a handful of songs preceded this recording's compelling one-two opening of *Family Business* and a soaring *Vigil*. We then get Fish in familiar storytelling mode explaining the inspiration behind *Rose Of Damascus*, which provides a suitably epic focal point to proceedings. *Weltschmerz* and *This Party's Over* fit neatly between *He Knows You Know* and *Cliché*, followed by a fulsome and powerful *View From The Hill*. The gorgeously sad *A Gentleman's Excuse Me* kicks off the encore, which inevitably includes *Script* alongside a hearty rendition of *The Company*. On this showing, the tour would have been a cracker.

Essi Berelian

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Blackberry Smoke's *Charlie Starr* on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Hannah May Kilroy**

Guitarist and vocalist Charlie Starr has led Atlanta's Blackberry Smoke for two decades now, blazing the trail for a new wave of southern rock. His childhood was soundtracked by bluegrass, country and gospel, and he has an unyielding love for the Rolling Stones.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

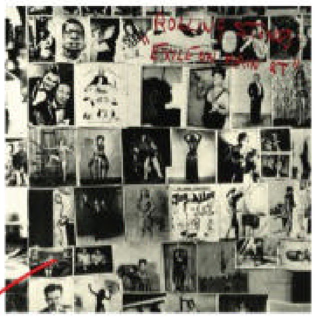
My dad playing bluegrass on guitar. I was around four or five. I was completely fascinated with the stories in these songs, particularly one called the *Wreck Of The Old 97*, about a train engineer that died.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

Probably a Black Sabbath song, *Iron Man* or *War Pigs*, at a high school talent show. Our band didn't have a singer, so it would have been an instrumental version. Everybody wanted to be a guitar player, and no one was brave enough to sing. The band was called Malteze. I really don't know why.

GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

Exile On Main St. by the Rolling Stones. Most definitely. I think it covers everything as far as rock'n'roll music goes. Not only rock'n'roll, it also has gospel, blues and soul. They captured it all so perfectly. It's so dirty and nefarious – almost a little scary. It's also one of those records where when I start it, I have to finish it.



THE BEST LIVE ALBUM

At Fillmore East by the Allman Brothers. I read somewhere that the producer, Tom Dowd, said there are no overdubs on this record, it's them playing and singing and being fantastic. As a southern guitar player, Duane Allman is revered by myself and others like me. We learned every note of that record he played, but he was the type of player that he probably never played those notes the same way again. It's funny how we worship one night of his musical life that he probably never repeated.

THE GUITAR HERO

It's a two-way tie between Jimmy Page and Billy Gibbons. They were such creative forces, and definitely an influence on me. They play very differently, but come from a similar place: electrified blues. Both such great composers and songwriters too.

THE SINGER

My favourite singer of all time is Little Richard. My mother loved rock'n'roll: Little Richard, the Stones, The Beatles. I think the first song of his I heard was *Lucille*, and I just wanted to hear it again and again! He was the first one who was really full of fire and brimstone, who really let loose on the microphone.

THE SONGWRITER

This is such a hard choice, but I'm gonna say Bob Dylan. He's written so many different types of songs, you can't really pin him down. He brought an intelligence to rock'n'roll songwriting. He influenced John Lennon so much that John apparently said: "I don't wanna write love songs any more, I wanna write like Bob."

THE ANTHEM

Won't Get Fooled Again by The Who. You could be in a bad mood or not having the best day, but when that song starts it's like: "Oh, I gotta stand up!"

CULT HERO

Doug Sahm. He was from San Antonio, Texas, and was a member of the Sir Douglas Quintet back in the mid-sixties. They were Texan guys who dressed up like British Invasion guys. Doug was the leader, and went on to blaze the trail for Tex-Mex rock.

THE BEST RECORD I'VE MADE

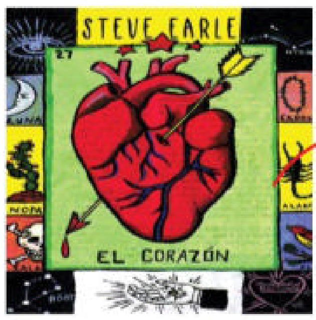
As far as our fans go, they seem to love *The Whippoorwill* best. It has the most requested songs on it. The funny thing was, we made that record in about ten days. I don't think I have a favourite. I'm a horrible critic of myself, so it's hard to be completely satisfied.

THE WORST RECORD I'VE MADE

I can honestly say I hope we haven't made it yet!

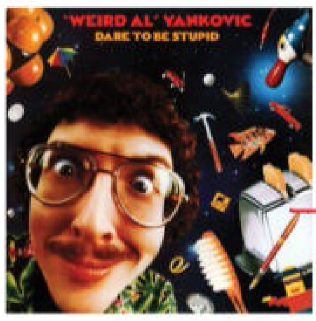
THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Fort Worth Blues by Steve Earle. My wife and I both agree on that. I understand that Steve wrote that for and about Townes Van Zandt, who was one of his mentors and a great friend to him. Even the sound of the song makes me well up, it's so powerful.



MY GUILTY PLEASURE

Right now my six year old son is fascinated with Weird Al Yankovic. Specifically his *Dare To Be Stupid* album. We listen to that every day. Whenever we get in the car he'll be like: "Dad, play *Yoda*! Play *Slime Creatures From Outer Space*!" And I do love it. It's fun.



THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND OF ALL TIME

NRBQ – that stands for New Rhythm And Blues Quartet. Specifically the guitar player, Big Al Anderson. He may be the most underrated guitar player I've heard. They were fantastic songwriters and players, and they played even the most complicated types of music, absolutely by the seat of their pants.

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN

Honky Tonk Women. It's a perfect rock'n'roll song from beginning to end. When I was learning bluegrass and traditional country music from my dad, I think that was the first music I really understood. And when I heard *Honky Tonk Women* from my mom's radio I thought: "Wait a minute, it's kinda the same thing as country music, it's just louder!"

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

I think *Amazing Grace*. It's beautiful and probably the most perfect gospel song that exists. It could also be the song I wish I'd written. Imagine being the person who created that amazing piece of music.

FF TAKEOVER

CHOSEN BY CHRIS SHIFLETT

I went on tour with Blackberry Smoke last year for a few weeks and got to support them. They were the nicest guys in the world, and I developed a good friendship with those folks too, especially with Charlie. Not only are they great band, but he's got maybe the best collection of beautiful vintage guitars I've ever seen anybody take on tour. Every day I'd be slobbering over his guitars.

CHARLIE STARR: JOBY SESSIONS; CHRIS SHIFLETT: DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

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